HENRY GEORGE
UNORTHODOX AMERICAN

by ALBERT JAY NOCK
H E N R Y G E O R G E
Unorthodox American
by ALBERT JAY NOCK

A depression was on in the year 1884. In those days depressions did not go by their Latin name as a rule, except when people wanted to put on airs about them, but were called by the simple English name of hard times. This streak of hard times lay very heavily on the Pacific Coast. It was aggravated by a great drought that burned up the grain crop and pastureage, and killed most of the cattle on the ranches. There was no business in farming or ranching, industries were closed down, and commerce was at a dead halt.

At this time Henry George was twenty-five years old, living miserably in San Francisco, where, after a long struggle with misfortune, he had set himself in a small way as a job printer. He had a wife and child, and his wife was shortly to give birth again. He could get no work, whether at printing or anything else, nor could he ask help from any one, for all the people he knew were wretchedly poor. Long afterward, speaking of this period, he said that as things went from bad to worse—"I came near starving to death, and at one time I was so close to it that I think I should have done so but for the job of printing a few cards which enabled me to keep a little corn meal. In this darkest time in my life my second child was born."

When this event happened he had no money, no food, no way to provide his wife with any care; he was alone in a bare lodging with a helpless suffering woman and a newborn baby. In a desperate state of mind he left the house and took to the last resort of the destitute.

"I walked along the street and made up my mind to get money from the first man whose appearance might indicate that he had it to give. I stopped a man, a stranger, and told him that my wife was confined and that I had nothing to give her to eat. He gave me the money. If he had not, I think I was desperate enough to have killed him."
a second question, to which George pledged his lifetime for an answer. The first question was: What is the cause—not any superficial and apparent cause, but the true fundamental cause of recurrent mental depres- sions? The second question was, what is the true fundamental cause of the wage inequality in the dis- tribution of wealth?

George succeeded in answering the first two questions to his own sat- isfaction while he was still a comparatively young man. This was the only success he ever had in his life; whatever else he touched failed. His one success, however, such as it was, led him through one of the strangest and most barren careers ever achieved in America, or for that mat- ter, in the world.

II

In principle, as the politicians say, Henry George’s boyhood followed the course laid out by the story-books that used to be written around the romance of American life. He did not exactly run away from school or run away to sea, but he did come to the same thing. He served notice on his parents so firmly that they could not keep him in their way. In the matter of schooling they perhaps thought it was just as well for him to have been an all-round failure at any kind of book-learning. Between the ages of six and fifteen when he tried his luck at four different schools, three of them private schools, and all of them first-rate as schools went in those days—and probably tought failed. His as well as they do now—but he was not worth his salt at any of them. He came through them like a man through a field of mar grades, entered the high school, stuck at it almost half a year, and then struck his colors for good and all; he never had another day’s schooling.

He said afterward, rather anastere- ly, that in his half year at the high school he “was idle, and wasted time.” He may have done so, but if he did it was exceptional, for as boy or man, he was never shiftless or dissipated, but always a hard worker, with an uncommon amount of intellectual curiosity and scien-

The worst of him was that he was hasty and impa-
tient, and of a roaming, restless dis-
position which probably made his parents think that his best hope of getting any kind of discipline lay in the forecasts, and that since he wanted most of all to go to sea, it

It was two-thirty P.M. before our watch got below to their plum-duff, which had been allowed in honour of the day. The rest of the day was rainy, with wind constantly varying, keeping us hailing on the braces. Thus closed the most miserable Fourth of July that I have ever yet spent, for I had to spit food at the ship's company.

When a boy of seventeen turns off such English as that, day after day, for his own eye only, no one should be surprised at what he does for the public eye at forty. It is not easy to hit just that blend of precision, cleanness, simplicity and grace—let the reader try it. George never wrote a sentence that needed a sec-

II

It is usually said that he learned to write by hard practice, mainly be-
tween 1865 and 1870, and it is true that his actual career as a writer began in that period. But he did not get his style then, for he always had a deep well of a diary that he kept on shipboard show that he wrote the same clear, precise, and lucid English at seventeen that he did at forty. For example:

"Wed. 11. I was routed out of a sleep of sleep at twelve o’clock to come on deck and keep my watch. This was turning out I found a great change in the weather. The wind had shifted and came out cool and fresh. The ship was running dead, before in a S.E. direction, making about an angle, and we hoisted a nameless flag. After keeping a cold and dreary watch until four A.M., we were re-

way, causing a great deal of trouble and keeping all hands from dinner.
close to an overload for a ship of her toneage. She never cargo, at any rate. She took a deal of tinkering, as the passage just quoted from George's journal shows. Before she was a week out her tiller broke in half, rotted at the bore, but fortunately the sea was calm enough to let the crew fix it back on the order to steer by, while the carpenter rigged a new gear. Except for incidents like these, and a few days of stretch of heavy weather in the Indian Ocean, the voyage was uneventful, enabling George to learn the sailor's trade in as many circumstances, probably, as he could have had. His captain seems to have been a very good sort, who saw to it that the crew got as decent treatment as the state of the ship allowed.

One did not go ashore much, though the "Hindoos" lay off Melbourne nearly a month. He looked the town over once, and did not care for it. This was three years after the gold rush of 1852, and a "readjustment" had set in—in plain language, the "good times" which made everything look down at the heel. All the people he saw were poor, idle, and dejected. Only the old also disappointed him. He did his duty by the scenery up the river, finding it very fine, and he took in the features of native life that arose out of the use of Australian wares. When his handwriting was fully formed, it was small and highly characteristic, but very clear and neat. Part of his father's idea in having him learn to set type was to improve his spelling. Like some other great writers, notably Count Tolstoy, he could not spell. This branch of the mechanics of writing seems to call for a foreknowledge of word or aptitude, which George never had. He thought typesetting helped him a little, but it could not have helped him much, for he misspelled even the commonest words all his life.

While he was working at the case, too, there happened one of those trivial incidents that turn out to be important in setting the pace of one's life. He heard an old printer say that in a new country wages are always high, while in an old country they are always low. George was struck by this remark and on thinking it over, he saw that it was true. Wages were certainly higher in the United States than in Europe, and he remembered that they were higher in Australia than in England. More than this, they were higher in the newer parts than in the older parts of the same country—higher in Oregon and California, for instance, than in New York and Pennsylvania.

George used to say that this was the first little puzzle in political economy that ever came his way. He did not give it any thought until long after; in fact, he says he did not begin to think intensely on any economic subject until conditions in California burned his mind that way. When finally he did so, however, the old printer's words came back to him as a road mark in his search for the causes of industrial depressions, and the cause of inequality in the distribution of wealth.

III

Like all those who anticipated Horace Greeley's classic advice to young men, Henry George went west for quick money and plenty of it. He had no notion of mining, but of prospecting; that is to say, his idea was not to work a mine, but to pick up mineral land, and then either sell it or have it worked on shares with somebody who would do the actual mining. In short, as he would have phrased it in later years, his idea was to make his fortune by appropriating the economic rent of natural resources, rather than by applying labor to them.

But there were too many ahead of him who had the same idea. Although the mineral region of California is as large as the British Isles, he found that those lively brethren had pre-empted every foot of it. He tried Oregon with no better luck, living meanwhile as best he could, by all sorts of expedients—farm work, tramping, storekeeping, peddling—and when he finally went back to his tribe, he did it as only another make-shift prospector could, and still haunted him. In a letter to his sister he says that in a dream the night before he was "scooping treasure out of the earth by handfuls, almost delirious with the thoughts of what I would now be able to do, and how happy we would all be!" and he adds wishfully that he supposes he dreamed all this as starved men dreamed of splendid feasts, or as destitute wanderers dream of brooks and fountains.

His trade kept him only very prosaically, for times were not easy even then, and there was no great demand for printing or printers. He got a job with one newspaper, then with a second, where, he says, "I worked until my clothes were in rags and the toes of my shoes were out. I slept in the office and did the best I could to economize, but finally I ran in debt thirty dollars for my
board bill." He left this job and went adrift again, and then, with no work, no prospects, and with but one piece of money in his pocket, he made a runaway match with a young Australian girl named Annie Fox.

They married not wisely—there is no doubt about that—but wonder-
fully well, for their marriage appears to have remained perfect until his death in 1897 dissolved it. Balzac called attention to a little-known truth when he said that "a great love is a masterpiece of art," and there are probably about as few really first-rate artists in this field as in any other. Moreover, a masterpiece in this field of art must be a collabo-
ration, and the chance of two first-
rate artists finding each other is ex-
remely small, practically a matter of pure luck. A Daphnis in any age may wander over the whole earth without meeting a Chloe, and a Cyn-
thia may survey whole legions of men and never see a Claudio. George's meeting with his wife was almost the only piece of sheer good luck he ever had, but it was a great piece of one. On the night of the twelfth of October, 1883, he wrote this note, and put it by her bedside for her to find next morning:

"It is twenty-three years ago to-
tnight since we first met, I only a month or two older than Harry, and you not much older than our Jen. For twenty-three years we have been closer to each other than to anyone else in the world, and I think we es-
teen each other more and love each other more than we first began to love. You are now 'fat, fair, and forty,' and to me the mature woman is handier and more lovable than the slip of a girl whom twenty-three years ago I met without knowing that my life was to be bound up with hers. We are not rich—so poor just now, in fact, that all I can give you on this anniversary is a little love-
letter—but there is no one we can afford to envy, and in each other's love we have what no wealth could compensate for. And so let us go on, true and loving, trusting in Him to carry us farther who has brought us so far with so little to regret."

George kept to his trade, since nothing that looked more lucrative turned up, and after his starring time of 1864 he began to make a little better living as a printer, though not much better, and he also began to consolidate some sort of position in San Francisco. No sooner was he fairly launched, however, than he threw his future to the winds by enlisting in a filibustering expe-
dition to help out the Mexican patri-
ots who were fighting the French em-
peror's ill-fated scheme for set-
ing up a vassal empire in Mexico, with the Austrian Archduke Maxi-
mus on the throne. The expedition was a comic-opera affair, planned in a fashion that amounted to piracy, and ended in a certain stalemate. George's elbow when the Federal au-
thorities put a stop to it before it got under way, was not satisfied with this grotesque performance, George immediately went into another. He took part in organizing the Monroe League, which was to be a second crusade into Mexico. The league had an elabo-
rate "council" which might have been got up by Gilbert and Sullivan, swarming in its members on a naked sword and the republican flag of Mexico; and Mrs. George, poor soul was sworn in as the only woman member. One wonders what she really thought of it. The league shortly perished of inanition without having done anything, and George made no further efforts in behalf of the afflicted Mexicans.

These two incidents reveal the one defect in George's natural endow-
ment, which is that of his excess gifts, his promptness, and his appar-
ent influence over a large and enthu-
siastic public, made him in the long run inefficient. He was unquestion-
ably one of the three or four great constructive statesmen of the nine-
teenth century, perhaps of any cen-
tury—he ranks with Turgot. His character was unmatched in the public life of his period. He was nobly serious, grandly coura-
gious, and so sincere as to force even the person of whom he had many, to speak well of him. He had great brilliancy, some wit, and the com-
mend of a fine irony; but he had absolutely no humor. He was as hu-
morless as Oliver Cromwell, a born crusader of the Old Testament type, convinced that he had an Old Testa-
ment mission to new Agag in places. All his life he had labored under the unnumberless man's liability to learn what none of us probably enjoys learning, that Truth is a cruel flirt, and must be treated accordingly. Court her obtrusively and she will turn her back; feign indifference, and she will throw herself at you with a coaxing submission. Try to force an acquaintance—try to make her put on her company manners for a gen-
eral public—and she will revolve them like an ugly termagant; let her take her own way and her own time, and she will show all her fascinations to every one who has eye to see them.

IV

George now committed himself to newspaper work, moving from paper to paper in all kinds of capacities, from typesetter to editor and part-
ner. And by 1866 he had become prosperous enough to start a bank
account. His editorial career was very spirited; he was in one row or another all the time, and while it may be said that in his treatment of State and local grievances he was on the popular side, he always lost. He made things lively for the Associated Press news monopoly, but though he got an anti-monopoly bill through the legislature, all that happened was that the monopoly broke his paper. He fought the Wells-Fargo express monopoly, and lost again—too much money against him. He attacked the Central Pacific's subsidized, and ran for the Assembly as a Democrat on that issue, but again there was too much money on the other side—the Democrats lost, the Central Pacific quickly bought up his paper, merged it with another, and George was out.

So it went. But George's private affairs brought up the old haunting questions. Even here in California he was now seeing symptoms of the same inequality that had oppressed him in New York. "Bananaz kings" were coming to the front, and four ex-shopkeepers of Sacramento, Stan-
ford, Crockett, Huntington, and Hop-
kins, were laying up immense for-
tunes out of the Central Pacific. The railway was bringing in population and commodities, which everybody thought was a good thing all round, yet wages were going down, exactly as the old printer in Philadelphia had said, and the masses were growing worse off instead of better.

About this matter of wages, George had had other testimony besides the old printer's. On his way to Ore-
gon a dozen years before, he fell in with a lot of miners who were talk-
ing about the Chinese, and ventured to ask what harm the Chinese were doing as long as they worked only the cheap diggings. "No harm now," one of the miners said, "but wages will not always be as high as they are today in California. As the country grows, as people come, wages will go down, and some day or other white people will be glad to get those diggings that the Chi-

men are working." George said that this idea, coming on top of what the printer had said, made a great im-
pression on him—the idea that "as
the country grew in all that we are hoping that it might grow, the condition of those who had to work for their living must become, not better, but worse. Yet in the short space of a dozen years this was precisely what was taking place before his own eyes.

Still, though his two great questions became more and more pressing, he could not answer them. His thought was still inchoate. He went around and around his ultimate answer, like somebody rambling after something on a table in the dark, often actually touching it without being aware that it was what he was after. Finally it came to him in a burst of true Cromwellian or Faulknerian drama out of "the commonplace reply of a passing teamster to a commonplace question." One day in 1871 he went for a horseback ride, and as he stopped to rest his horse on a rise overlooking San Francisco Bay—

"I asked a passing teamster, for want of something better to say, what land was worth there. He pointed to some cows grazing so far off that they looked like mice, and said, 'I don't know exactly, but there is a man over there who will sell some land for a thousand dollars an acre.' Just like a flash it came over me that there was the reason of advancing poverty with advancing wealth. With the growth of population, land grows in value, and the men who work it must pay more for the privilege.

"Yes, there it was. Why had wages suddenly shot up so high in California in 1849 that cooks in the restaurants of San Francisco got $500 a month? The reason now was simple and clear. It was because the places where they were found on land that did not belong to anybody. Any one could go to them and work them without having to pay an owner for the privilege. If the lands had been owned by somebody, it would have been land-values instead of wages that would have so suddenly shot up. Exactly this was what had taken place in the Bay region, in looking San Francisco Bay. The Central Pacific meant to make its terminus at Oakland, the increased population would need the land around Oakland to settle on, and land values had jumped up to a thousand dollars an acre. Naturally, then, George reasoned, the more public improvements there were, the better the transportation facilities, the larger the population, the more industry and commerce—the more of everything that makes for "prosperity"—the more would land values tend to rise, and the more would wages and interest tend to fall. George rode home thoughtful, translating the teamster's commonplace reply into the technical terms of economics. He reasoned that there were three factors in the production of wealth, and only three: natural resources, labor, and capital. When natural resources are unappropriated, obviously the whole yield of production is divided into wages, which go to labor, and interest, which goes to capital. But when they are appropriated, production has to carry a third charge—rent. Moreover, wages and interest, when there is no rent, are regulated strictly by free competition; but rent is a monopoly charge, and hence is always "all the traffic will bear."

"Well, then, since natural resources are pure social in their origin, created by the community, should not rent go to the community rather than to the individual? Why tax industry and enterprise at all—why not just charge rent? There would be no need to interfere with the private ownership of natural resources. Let a man own all of them he can get his hands on, and make as much out of them as he may, untaxed; but let him pay the community their annual rental value, determined simply by what other people would be willing to pay for the use of the same holdings. George could see justification for wages and interest, on the ground of natural right; and for private ownership of natural resources, on the ground of public policy; but he could see none for the private appropriation of economic rent. In his view it was sheer theft. If he was right, then it also followed that as long as economic rent remains unconfiscated, the taxation of industry and enterprise is pure highwaymenry, especially tariff taxation, for this virtually delegates the government's taxing power to private persons.

"George worked out these ideas in a short way in a forty-page pamphlet with the title, "Our Land and Land Policy, National and State," which did not reach many readers but did something for his reputation as a tribune of the people. The subject thrilled in his mind through five years of newspaper work, at the end of which he lost his paper and was once more on the ragged edge. He had begun a magazine article on the cause of industrial depressions, but was dissatisfied with it—one could do nothing with the topic in so little space. What was needed was a solid treatise which would recast the whole science of political economy.

"He felt that he could write this treatise, but how were he and his family to live meanwhile? He had used his influence on the Democratic side in the last State campaign, and had been particularly instrumental in selecting the governor; so he wrote to Governor Irwin, asking him "to give me a place where there was little to do and something to get, so that I could devote myself to some important writing." The governor gave him the State inspectorship of gas meters, which was a moderately well-paid job, and a sinecure. This was in January, 1876, and in March, 1876, he finished the manuscript of a book entitled "Progress and Poverty; An Inquiry into the Cause of Industrial Depressions, and of Increase of Want with Increase of Wealth; The Remedy."

V

No one would publish the book, not so much because it was revolutionary (though one firm objected to it emphatically on that ground) but because it was a bad prospect. No work on political economy, aside from textbooks, had ever sold well enough either in the United States or England to make another one attractive. Besides, the unparalleled depression of the seventies was making all the publishing houses sail as close to the wind as they could run. Logically, a book on the cause of hard times ought to interest people just then, but book buyers do not buy by logic, and publishers are aware of it.

By look or crook George and his friends got together enough money to make plates for an author's edition of five hundred copies; George himself set the first few sticks of type. At three dollars a copy he sold enough of these almost to clear the cost; and presently the firm of Appleton, who had rejected the manuscript, wrote him that if he would let them have the plates, they would bring out the book in a two-dollar edition; and this was done.

It fell as dead as Cicero, not even getting a cursory press notice in America for months. George sent some complimentary copies abroad, where it did rather better. Emile de Laveleye praised it highly in the "Revue Scientifique"; it was translated into German, and its reviews, as George said, were "way up." Some sort of sale began in March, 1880,
William M. Irvis to buy him off with the promise of a seat in Congress. Irvis told him he could never be naysayer—and in fact there is little room for doubt that he was resoundingly counted out—and George asked why, if that were so, there could be any objection to his running. Irvis told him frankly that it was because his running would raise hell; and George replied with similar frankness that that was precisely what he wanted to do.

With this purpose in mind, George came to New York on the heels of his book, selling out what little he possessed in California. "My pleasant little home that I was so comfortable in is gone," he wrote sadly, "and I am afloat at forty-two, poorer than at twenty-one, I do not complain, but there is some bitterness in it." During his first year in New York, while his cherished book lay dead, he lived in obscurity, wretchedly poor; and then the time came when he could take advantage of something on which the eyes of the whole English-speaking world were fixed—the Irish rent-war.

VI

Ireland at that time was front-page news on every paper printed in the English language. Parnell and Dillon crossed the ocean, spoke in sixty-two American cities, addressed the House of Representatives, and took away a great fund of American dollars with which to fight the battles of the rack-rented Irish tenant. They were followed by the best men in the movement, Michael Davitt, who came over late in 1880 to tend the fire that Parnell and Dillon had kindled. George met him and got him "under conviction," as the revivalists say, and then wrote a pamphlet entitled "The Irish Land Question; what it involves, and how alone it can be settled."

From that moment Henry George was, in the good sense of the term, a man. The pamphlet was a masterpiece of polemics, a call to action, and a prophecy, all in one. Public opinion in America and England, it had an immense success. George was amazed at the space it got in the Eastern papers. "It is a astonishing thing," he wrote, "is the goodness of the comments . . . I am conscious, if I am not mistaken, of it. It is hard to see how a man who had ever done a day's work on a newspaper could write in that unimaginative way. With Irish influence as strong as it was on the Eastern seaboard, and with every Irish man sitting up nights to curse the hated Savannah landlords and their puppet government, how could the newspaper comments not be good?"

The English papers, which side their bread was buttered on, a rabble of charmed and vociferous Irish closed around the simple-hearted pamphleteer, probably not troubling themselves much about his philosophy of the Irish land question, but nevertheless all for him. He was against the government and against the landlords, and that was enough. In this they were like the vast majority of readers who were led to peck at "Progress and Poverty" because they had heard that the book voiced their discontent; probably not five per cent of them read it through, or were able to understand what they did read, but they were all for it nevertheless, and all for glorifying Henry George. The American branch of the Land League immediately put George on the lecture platform, and when the Irish troubles culminated in the imprisonment of Davitt, Dillon, Parnell, and O'Kelly, an Irish newspaper published in New York sent him to the seat of war as a correspondent.

He reached Dublin, dogged by secret-service men, and gave a public lecture with such effect that his audience went fairly wild. He wrote a friend that he had "the hardest work possible" to keep the crowd from unharnessing his cab-horse and dragging his carriage through the streets to his hotel. His reports to "The Irish World" got wide distribution. When he crossed to England, interest opened many doors to him outside political circles, and curiosity opened many more. He dined with most of the lions of the period, Beaumont Spencer, Tennyson, Justin McCarthy, Wallace, Browning, Chamberlain, John Bright, and made an excellent impression. He wrote his wife that he could easily have become a lion himself if he had liked, but he thought it best to keep clear of all that sort of thing.

He spoke, debated, and addressed huge audiences in Scotland. Returning to Ireland, he got still louder cheers, and simply knew up twice on suspicion. His notoriety was helped, too, by the humorous character of the proceedings before the examining magistrate, which reminded all England of Mr. Nupkins' examination of the Pickwickians. George took this occasion to write the President a blistering letter about the trucking imbecility of
the American Minister, Lowell, and this not only gave him another line of publicity but also had a good practical effect. The Secretary of State sent him a circular letter proridng up the service, and asked George to file a claim for damages, which George refused to do, saying he was not interested in that, but only in seeing that the rights of American citizens in foreign lands were properly defended.

All this celebrity was a great HIF for "Progress and Poverty." The book suddenly became an international best seller. "The London Times" gave it a five-column review which made its fortune in all the British possessions; the review came out in the morning, and by afternoon the publishers had sold out every copy in stock. When a new edition was rushed out, one house in Melbourne ordered 1,200 copies, and 300 were sent to New Zealand. George was invited everywhere, banqueted everywhere, asked to speak on all sorts of occasions, reported everywhere; and when he left the British Isles for home, he was perhaps the most widely talked-of man in either hemisphere.

He had intended to stay abroad three months, but remained a year. When he landed at New York, he found himself, as he modestly said, "pretty near famouc." At once the newspapers blew his horn, the labor unions got up a tremendous mass meeting for him, and, strange as it seems, some of the upper crust of Wall Street gave him a complimentary dinner at Delmonico's, with Justice van Brunitt, Henry Ward Beecher, and Francis B. Thurban among the speakers. No one knows why they did this. Possibly it was a more or less palinode gesture toward an American who had made a name in England; possibly an inexpensive and non-committal move to please the influential Irish; possibly a gesture of anxiety toward a man well on his way to becoming a dangerous enemy, but who might be led to see something on their side of social questions. Whatever prompted the occasion, it was a notable affair, and George rose to its measure with easy and affable dignity.

This dinner and this banquet marked the parting of the ways for George, though probably no one was aware of it at the moment, George least of all. A reformer has a choice of three courses. He can carry his doctrine direct to the people, and promote it by methods that are essentially political; he can convert people of power and influence, and promote it largely by indirection; or he can merely formulate it, hang it up in plain sight, and let it win its own way by free acceptance. The first is the course of the evangelist and missionary; and to a firm believer in eighteenth-century political theory, like George, it is the only one possible—it is wholly republican, wholly in the American tradition. It is interfering to speculate on what might have happened if, for a while at least, he had followed up his one chance to get at the minds of those who really controlled the country's immediate future, or if he had taken the third or sacrificial course; but he did neither. He was a staunch republican, committed to republican method.

For the next two years George lived among the populace, speaking and writing incessantly, and directing the development of his doctrine into a distinctly political character. At that time the press was much more an organ of opinion than it is now, much freer and more forcible, so that his writings were in demand. Even a popular publication like "Leslie's" asked him for a series on the problems of the time, while at the other end of the scale "The North American Review" made him a preliminary start a straightforward political and economic weekly under his editorship.

Yet though his method was that of the evangelist, he did not adopt the tactics of the demagogue or the practical politician. He was probably the most effective public speaker of his time—"The London Times" thought he was fully the equal of Cobden or of Bright, if not a little better—but he never took advantage of an audience, or flattered the galleries, or left the smallest doubt of where he stood and what was in his mind. When, for example, somebody introduced him in a mauldin way to a working-class audience as "one who always was for the poor man," George began his speech by saying, "Ladies and gentlemen, I am not for the poor man. I am not for the rich man. I am for man."

Yet, on the other hand, when the official free-traders of the Atlantic seaboard, led by Sumner, Godkin, Beecher, Curtis, Lowell, and Hewitt, opened their arms to George, he refused to fall in. His free-trade speeches during Cleveland's second campaign were really devoted to showing by implication that they were a hollow lot, and that their ideas of free trade was nothing more or less than this that soon became apparent that his hell-raising was raising as much hell with his supporters and potential friends as with his enemies. Like Strafford of old, he was for "thorough," no matter whose head came off or whose feet smelted. All the Irish leaders, even Davitt, cooled off to the freezing point when they found that he was down on the Kilmainham treaty and dead against any compromise on the issues of the rent-war, or any watering down of the program of restoring one hundred per cent of Ireland's land to one hundred per cent of Ireland's people. The Socialists were not unfriendly at first, and some of George's followers thought a sort of working alli- ance with them might be vamped up for political effect, but when George attacked their doctrine of collectiv- ism and stateism, they most naturally showed all their teeth. George held with Paley and Thomas Jefferson that government is at best a necessary evil, and the less of it the better. Hence the right thing was to decentralize it as far as possible, and reduce the functions and powers of the state to an absolute minimum, which, he said, the confiscation of rent would do automatically; where- as the collectivist proposal to con- fiscate and manage natural resources as a state enterprise would have precisely the opposite effect—it would tend to make the state everything and the individual nothing.

George was moreover the terror of the political routemakers. When the Republi- cans suddenly raised the tariff issue in 1880 the Democratic commis- sion asked him to go on the stump. They arranged a long list of engage- ments for him, but after he made one speech they begged him by tele- graph not to make any more. The nub of his speech was that he had heard of high-tariff Democrats and revenue-tariff Democrats, but he was a no-tariff Democrat who wanted real free trade, and he was out for that or nothing; and naturally no good bi-partisan national committee could put up with such talk as that, especially from a man who really meant it.

Yet, on the other hand, when the official free-traders of the Atlantic seaboard, led by Sumner, Godkin, Beecher, Curtis, Lowell, and Hewitt, opened their arms to George, he refused to fall in. His free-trade speeches during Cleveland's second campaign were really devoted to showing by implication that they were a hollow lot, and that their ideas of free trade was nothing more or less than this that soon became apparent that his hell-raising was raising as much hell with his supporters and potential friends as with his enemies. Like Strafford of old, he was for "thorough," no matter whose head came off or whose feet smelted. All the Irish leaders, even Davitt, cooled off to the freezing point when they found that he was down on the Kil- mainham treaty and dead against any compromise on the issues of the rent-war, or any watering down of the program of restoring one hundred per cent of Ireland's land to one hundred per cent of Ireland's people. The Socialists were not unfriendly at first, and some of George's followers thought a sort of working alli- ance with them might be vamped up for political effect, but when George attacked their doctrine of collectiv- ism and stateism, they most natural- ly showed all their teeth. George held with Paley and Thomas Jefferson that government is at best a necessary evil, and the less of it the better. Hence the right thing was to decentralize it as far as possible, and reduce the functions and powers of the state to an absolute minimum, which, he said, the confiscation of rent would do automatically; where- as the collectivist proposal to con- fiscate and manage natural resources as a state enterprise would have precisely the opposite effect—it would tend to make the state everything and the individual nothing.

George was moreover the terror of the political routemakers. When the Republi- cans suddenly raised the tariff issue in 1880 the Democratic commis- sion asked him to go on the stump. They arranged a long list of engage- ments for him, but after he made one speech they begged him by tele- graph not to make any more. The nub of his speech was that he had heard of high-tariff Democrats and revenue-tariff Democrats, but he was a no-tariff Democrat who wanted real free trade, and he was out for that or nothing; and naturally no good bi-partisan national committee could put up with such talk as that, especially from a man who really meant it.

Yet, on the other hand, when the official free-traders of the Atlantic seaboard, led by Sumner, Godkin, Beecher, Curtis, Lowell, and Hewitt, opened their arms to George, he refused to fall in. His free-trade speeches during Cleveland's second campaign were really devoted to showing by implication that they were a hollow lot, and that their ideas of free trade was nothing more or less than this that soon became apparent that his hell-raising was raising as much hell with his supporters and potential friends as with his enemies. Like Strafford of old, he was for "thorough," no matter whose head came off or whose feet smelted. All the Irish leaders, even Davitt, cooled off to the freezing point when they found that he was down on the Kil- mainham treaty and dead against any compromise on the issues of the rent-war, or any watering down of the program of restoring one hundred per cent of Ireland's land to one hundred per cent of Ireland's people. The Socialists were not unfriendly at first, and some of George's followers thought a sort of working alli- ance with them might be vamped up for political effect, but when George attacked their doctrine of collectiv- ism and stateism, they most natural- ly showed all their teeth. George held with Paley and Thomas Jefferson that government is at best a necessary evil, and the less of it the better. Hence the right thing was to decentralize it as far as possible, and reduce the functions and powers of the state to an absolute minimum, which, he said, the confiscation of rent would do automatically; where- as the collectivist proposal to con- fiscate and manage natural resources as a state enterprise would have precisely the opposite effect—it would tend to make the state everything and the individual nothing.

George was moreover the terror of the political routemakers. When the Republi- cans suddenly raised the tariff issue in 1880 the Democratic commis- sion asked him to go on the stump. They arranged a long list of engage- ments for him, but after he made one speech they begged him by tele- graph not to make any more. The nub of his speech was that he had heard of high-tariff Democrats and revenue-tariff Democrats, but he was a no-tariff Democrat who wanted real free trade, and he was out for that or nothing; and naturally no good bi-partisan national committee could put up with such talk as that, especially from a man who really meant it.
ist Germany? None of the official free-traders could answer that ques-
tion, of course, for there was no an-
swer. George had already developed his full doctrine of trade in a book, published in 1886, called "Protection or Free Trade"—a book which, in-
cidentally, gave a reader the best possible introduction to "Progress
and Poverty."

He laid down the law to organized labor in the same style, showing
that there was no such thing as a la-
bor-problem, but only a monopoly-
problem, and that when natural re-
source monopoly disappeared, only
question of wages, hours, and con-
ditions of labor would automatically disappear with it. This political li-
ternal got the hardest treatment of all.

George seems to have regarded him
as the greatest obstruction to social
progress—an unavory compound,
half knave, half fool, and flavored
colourfully with "unctuous re
titude." When John Bright, the Moses of lib-
erialism, followed George on the rostrum at Birmingham, calling his pro-
posals "the greatest, the wildest, the most remarkable ... imported lately by an American Inventor," all George could add to say was (in a private
letter) that "the old man is utterly ignorant of what he is talking about—
which was strictly true; and of
Frederic Harrison's lectures at Edin-
burgh and Newcastle he said only that "his is the very crassness of op-
opposition, if I can judge by the re-
ports."

VII

Thus intellectually he was cut out with
every organized force in the whole
area of discontent; out with the
Socialists, out with the professional
Irish, the professional laborers, the pro-
fessional progruelism, liberalism,
and mugwumpery. His sympathies
and affections however were always
with the rank and file of revolt
against the existing economic order;
his heart was with all the disaffect-
ed, though his mind might not be en-
tirely with them. This being so, the
two years following his first visit to
Ragged School was a period the who-
ma of a mere proletarian class-leader
whose principles and intentions were
purely predating. As Abram S.
Hewitt most unscrupulously put it,
his purpose was no more than "to
array working men against million-
aire."

Then at the end of these two years there
happened the one thing need-
f ul to greater his reputation and
make it permanent. When the
labor unions of New York City de-
cided to enter the mayoralty cam-
paign of 1886, they looked to George
as the best vote-getter in sight, and
gave him their nomination. With
this, whatever credit he may have
had in America as an economist and
philosopher vanished forever, leaving
him only the uncertain and momen-
tary prestige of a political demagog,
an agitator, and a crank.

George had misgivings, not of de-
feat but of discredit in his role of
candidate, but they came too late.
The course he had chosen years be-
fore led straight to the quicksand of
practical politics, and now his feet
were in it. He temporized with
the nomination, demanding a petition
signed by thirty thousand citizens
pledged to vote for him, which was
immediately forthcoming—and there
he was!

The campaign was uncommonly
bitter. The other candidates were
Hewitt and Theodore Roosevelt, and
their methods bore hard on George
in ways that Hewitt, at any rate,
must somewhat have gagged at, for
he was a man of breeding—still, he
lent himself to it. It was easy to
vulgarize George, because the allega-
tion was always-and he was a sheer
proletarian leader was true enough, as
far as this campaign went; he was, official-
ly and by nomination, a labor candi-
date. Some among his supporters,
off course, understood his ideas and
purposes and believed in them, but
these were relatively few; the ma-
jority were mere Adullamites. Hewitt
won the election nominally—in all
reasonable likelihood he was counted
in—but George's vote was so large
that "The New York Times" saw in
it "an event demanding the most se-
rious attention and study"; while
"The St. James Gazette," of London,
In a strong grandmotherly vein, ad-
vised "all respectable Americans to
forget the trumpery of party fights
and political differentiation, and face
the new danger threatening the com-
morning."

As far as George was concerned,
there was no need of this warning,
for his day in politics was done. This
one campaign was the end of him. He
was no longer a man to be feared
or even reckoned with. Tothose on
the inside of practical politics, he
was hero worship by the des-

card as the worst of all liabilities,

defeated candidate. To America
at large, he was only another in the
innumerable array of bogus prophets
and mushroom orators. There, too,
the temper of the times changed.
Disaffection broke up into sects, and
popular attention was soon added by
a kaleidoscopic succession of men and
issues cleverly manipulated on the
public stage—Cleveland and 're-
form;' Hanna and the full dinner-

pail; Peffer and populism, McKinley
and imperialism, Bryan and free sil-
ver, Roosevelt and progressiveism;
foreign embarrassments, jingoism,
The Spanish War, Mrs. Mary Ellen
Lease, Mrs. Eddy, Carry Nation, Jer-
ry Simpson, Le Follette and the War-
constitute idea, organized charity, "foun-
dations" for this-or that, the rise of
the higher learning, woman's suffrage,
the Anti-Sabon League, "commission
government" for cities, the Initiative
and referendum—was ever such a
welter of nómostrum and nostrum-pod-
diers turned loose anywhere on earth
in the same length of time? No
wonder that Mr. Jefferson, mourn-
fully surveying America's prospects,
said, "What a Bedlamite is man!"

Before a year was over, George had
dropped into a historical place
amidst all this racket, from which he
has never emerged, as just one more
exploded demagogue. He ran for a
state office in 1887, but got little
more than half the votes in New
York City, his stronghold, than he
had got in the mayoralty campaign
only a year before.

The last ten years of his life were
devoted largely to a weekly paper,
"The Standard," in which he con-
tinued to press his economic doctrine,
but it amounted to very little. He
visited England, where he found
his former popularity still holding
good. He also made a tour around
the world, and was received magnifi-
cently in his former home, Califor-
nia, and in the British colonies. His
main work during this period, how-
ever, was writing his "Science of Po-

citical Economy," which his death in-
terrupted; fortunately not until it
was so nearly finished that the rest
of his design for it could be easily
filled in.

In this period, too, his circum-
stances, for the first time in his life,
were fairly easy. He had received
some small gifts and legacies, and
latterly a couple of well-to-do friends
saw to it that he should finish his
work without anxiety. It is an in-
teresting fact that George stands
alone in American history as a writer
who earned his million, and as an orator whose speech attracted
thousands, yet who never made a
dollar for it.

His death had a setting of great
drama or of great pathos, according
to the view that one chooses to take
of it. The municipal monstrosity
called the Greater New York was put
together in the late 'nineties, and some of George's friends and asoci-
ates, still incorrigibly politically
minded, urged on him the toil of
hopes of running as an independent
candidate for the majority of
Seth Low, then president of Colum-
bia University, and Robert van Wyck,
who was the formidable Tammany's
candidate, were in the field—the out-
come was clear—but yet George acceded.
It is incredible that he could have
had the faintest hope of winning;
most probably he thought it would be
one more chance, almost certain-
lly his last, to bear testimony before
the people of his adopted city with
the living voice.
He had had a touch of apathy in
1890, revealing a weakness of the
blood vessels in his brain, and his con-
tion now was such that every phys-
ician he consulted told him he could
not possibly stand the strain of a
campaign; and so it proved. He
opened his campaign with a rapid pace,
speaking at one or more meetings
every night, nearly always with all
his old clearness and force. Three
weeks before election he spoke at
four meetings in one evening, and
went to bed at Union Square Ho-
tel, much exhausted by the first
morning his wife awoke to find him
in an adjoining room, standing in
the hall as if an orator, his hand
on the back of a chair, his head erect
and his eyes open. He repeated
the one word 'year' many times, with
varying inflections, but on becoming
silent he never spoke again.
Mrs. George put her arm about him, led
him back to his bed with some diffi-
culty, and there he died.

VIII

"Progress and Poverty" is the first
and only thorough, complete, scien-
tific inquiry ever made into the fun-
damental cause of industrial depres-
sions and involuntary poverty. The
abest minds of the century attacked
and condemned it—Professor Huntley,
the Duke of Argyll, Goldwin Smith,
Leo XIX, Frederic Harrison, John
Bright, Joseph Chamberlain. Never-
theless, in a preface to the definite
edition, George said what very few authors of technical work have
ever been able to say, that he had
not met with a single criticism or
objection that was not fully anticipa-
ted and answered in the book it-
self. For years he debated its basic
positions with any one who cared to
try, and was never worsted.
Yet, curiously, though there have
been a number of industrial depres-
sions since George's death in 1897,
some of them very severe, the book
has been so completely obscured by
the reputation which George's propa-
gandist enterprises fastened on him,
that one would not know it had been
written. In the whole course of the
recent depression, for instance, no ut-
erance of any man at all prominent
in our public life, with one excep-
tion, would show that he had ever
heard of it. The president of Co-
lumbia University resurrected George
in a commencement address two
years ago, and praised him warmly,
but from what he said he seems not
to have read him.
It is interesting, too, now that suc-
cessive depressions are bearing har-
ness and harder on the capitalist, pre-
cisely as George predicted, to observe
that George and his associate an-
thromonomists of forty years ago are
turning out to be the best friends
that the capitalist ever had. Stand-
ing staunchly for the rights of cap-
tal, as against collectivist proposals
to confiscate interest as well as rent,
George formulated a defense of those
rights that is irrefragable. All those
who have tried to bite that file have
merely broken their teeth. There is
a certain irony in the fact that the
school he has now begun to re-
fer acutely from the recurring pro-
tractions of industry and the ever-
growing cost of stateism, is the very
one which assailed George...most fur-
iously as an "apostle of anarchy and
revolution." Yet the rapid progress
of collectivism and stateism could
have been foreseen; there was every
sign of it, and the capitalist class
should have been the one to heed
these signs devoutly and interpret
them intelligently. Bismarck saw
what was coming, and even Herbert
Spencer predicted terrible times
ahead for England, and still more
terrible times for America—a long
run of stateism and collectivism, then
"civil war, immense bloodshed, end-
ing in a military despotism of the
severest type."

IX

Litt John Bright, nearly every one
credited the "American inventor"
with a brand-new discovery in his
idea of confiscating economic rent.
Georke did in fact come by the idea
independently, but others whom he
had never heard of came by it long
before him. Precisely the same pro-
posal had been made in the eight-
eenth century by men whom Mr.
Bright might have thought twice
about snuffing—the French school
known as the Economistes, which in-
cluded Quesnay, Turgot, du Pont de
Neuville, Mirabeau, le Trousseau, Cour-
not. They even used the term Phin-
pet unique, "the single tax," which
George's American disciples arrived
at independently, and which George
copied. The idea of confiscating
rent also occurred to Patriotic Ed-
ward Dove at almost the same time
that it occurred to George. It had
been broached in England almost a
century earlier by Thomas Spence,
and again in Scotland by William
Ogilvie, a professor at Aberdeen.
George's doctrine of the combination
of social values was also explicitly
anticipitated by Thomas Paine, in his
pamphlet called "Agrarian Justice."
George's especial merit is not that
of original discovery, though his dis-
covery was original—as much so
as those of Darwin and Wallace.
It was simply not new; Turgot had
even set forth the principle on which
George formulated the law of wages,
though George did not know that
any one had done so. George's great
merit is that of having worked out
his discovery to its full logical length
in a complete system, which none of
his predecessors did not only estab-
lishing fundamental economics as a
true science, but also discerning and
clearly marking out its natural re-
relations with history, politics, and
ethics.

The key to an understanding of
George's career may be found in the
story that Lincoln Steffens tells about
an afternoon ride with the devil on
the top of a Fifth Avenue. The
devil was in uncommonly good ap-
 praises that day, and entertained Stef-
vens with a fine salutary line of ven-
nicences half way up the avenue, when
Steffens suddenly caught sight of
a man on the sidewalk who was
carefully carrying a small parcel of
truth. Steffens nudged the devil,
gave the man a casual glance, but
kept on talking, apparently not
interested. When Steffens could get
a word in, he said, "See here, didn't
you notice that man back there had
got hold of a little bit of truth?"

"Yes, of course I noticed it," re-
p lied the devil. "Why?"

"But surely that's a very danger-
ous thing," Steffens said. "Aren't you
going to do something about it?"

"No hurry, my dear fellow," the
devil answered indulgently. "It's a
simple matter. I'll be rummaging
among him again one of these days,
and I'll get him to organize it!"

It is impossible, of course, to
gues what George's historical position
would have been if he had had less of
the Covenanter spirit and more of
the experienced and penetrating hu-
mor of a Socrates, with a corre-
sponding distrust of republican meth-
ods in the propagation of doctrine.
The question is an easy one, yet to
a student of civilization the great
interest of George's career is that at
every step he makes one ask it. Per-
haps in any case the Gadsen rout
would have trampled him to the same
depth of obscurity. Probably—al-
mest certainly—his doctrine would
have been picked up and wrested to
the same service of a sectarian class-
political that would have left it unrec-
ognizable. Experience, humor, and
reason go for very little when they
coalesce with what Ernest Renan so
finely called la materialisme vulgaire,
la possess de l'homme interesse. Yet
one can hardly doubt that George
would emerge from obscurity sooner,
and his doctrine stand in a clearer
and more favorable light if he had
taken another course.

Much more important, however, is
the question whether George's faith
in the common man's collective judg-
ment was justified; whether such
faith is ever justified. Does the com-
mon man possess the force of intel-
lect to appreciate the processes of
reason correctly, or the force of char-
acter to follow them disinterestedly?
The whole future of eighteenth-cen-
tury political doctrine, the doctrine
on which our republic was nominal-
ly established, hangs on this ques-
tion—the question, in short, whether
republicanism has not put a burden
on the common man which is great-
er than he can bear.

George never had a moment's doubt
of the answer. Yet, seeing what sort
of political leadership the common
man invariably chose to follow, and
the kind of issue that invariably at-
tracted him, he ended the argument
of "Progress and Poverty" with a
clear warning, too long to be quoted
here, against the wholesale corrup-
tion of the common man by the gov-
ernment which the common man him-
self sets up. It is well worth read-
ing now, whether one finds the root
of this corruption in the common
man's weakness of mind and char-
acter, or whether one finds it, as
George did, in the unequal distribu-
tion of wealth. Whatever one may
think about that, there is no possible
doubt that George's warning has the
interest of absolutely accurate proph-
ecy.

It is rather remarkable, finally,
since the reading public's whim for
biography has set writers to pawing
over so many American worthies,
that no one has written a competent
full-length biography of Henry
George, who was not only one of
America's very greatest men, but al-
so was in so many respects typically
American, and whose spectacular ca-
reer was also so typical. His dis-
abilities were precisely those of the
civilization that produced him, and
his life was sacrificed on the altar of
those disabilities, precisely where the
life of that civilization is being sac-
fificed. What more by way of inter-
est could an able and honest biogra-
pher ask?