

Tributes to the Memory of Joseph Dana Miller

Spoken at The Bier

By STEPHEN BELL

IN the passing of Joseph Dana Miller we have lost a friend, a brother in our social faith, a valued and wise counsellor, a man of renown, but we are fortunate in having had him so long. He is another of those to whom has been given the vision of the Promised Land, the World as it Ought to Be, the civilization that will be, when mankind has grown up to mental and spiritual maturity, but who has not been permitted to enter it in this life.

For more than half a century he has cherished that vision of the civilization that will be when men have realized the meaning of Lincoln's prayer at Gettysburg—"That this Nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom" and sought to show it to others—a freedom in which every man shall be free to earn an honest living, in which "Every man may sit under his own vine and fig tree with none to vex him or make him afraid," a freedom in which "They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall *not* build, and another inhabit; they shall *not* plant, and another eat. They shall not labor in vain nor bring forth for trouble, for they are the Blessed of the Lord, and their children with them."

Whatever may be the vicissitudes of fortune which may have overtaken us, whatever may be the conditions in which our lot is cast, to have seen that vision of the World to Be and to have tried to bring its realization nearer is something to make life worth living indeed, and to none of us was that vision clearer than to Joseph Dana Miller, who did what he could to hasten its realization.

My grief at his passing is born of a sense of great personal loss, but it is softened by a feeling of exaltation and thankfulness that I was privileged to know him over a period of forty-five years, and can say,

"He was my friend!"

The Greatest Writer of Georgeism Since 1897

IN December, 1886, I called on Rev. Mr. McCarthy to whom I met in Henry George's campaign that fall. He introduced me to a young man with a rosy, boyish complexion, named Joseph Dana Miller. When I had finished my business with Rev. McCarthy, Joe and I left together. Then he informed me that he was also a Georgeist and deplored his inability to take part in the speech-

making of the campaign. For that reason he was taking lessons in oratory from Rev. McCarthy, for he was convinced that the '86 campaign was the beginning of a great movement that would require many trained speakers. Even then I was doubtful if politics was the way to advance the cause. I am now firmly convinced that that is "how not to do it." I told Joe that of the 68,000 votes cast for George I did not believe a thousand really understood the argument of "Progress and Poverty"; that dissatisfaction of the workingman with both the Democratic and Republican parties accounted for most of George's vote. He was inclined to agree with me but said that in any event trained speakers were required for lecturing and teaching.

With this beginning I looked forward to hearing Joe frequently on the platform and on the banqueting floor but during the ensuing fifty-two years I doubt if he made a dozen speeches. I was fairly active in Single Tax circles; indeed I was drafted as a candidate for a minor judgeship in 1887 when Henry George was a candidate for Secretary of the State of New York, and do not recall that Joe made a single speech during the campaign. George's vote in the entire State of New York was about half that he received in the City of New York the previous year. Those who knew Joe well have no doubt of his reason for not making speeches. Joe was painfully shy and modest and probably suffered when called upon to make a speech.

But those who were privileged to listen to an address from his lips were privileged indeed. Not only did he use Addisonian English but it was shot through with sincerity. He was eloquent; but I think the eloquence was innate and not imparted by his teacher in 1886. I recall one occasion of a dinner the Manhattan Single Tax Club gave to a distinguished foreigner. All of the three or four advertised speakers (of whom I was one) had prepared their addresses. After they had finished their were many cries for Joe Miller, but he shook his head. The toastmaster finally induced him to speak. It was the unanimous verdict (including the advertised speakers) that Joe's address was the hit of the evening.

He was happiest sitting in a shabby little office writing about the philosophy that was religion to him. For relaxation he wrote poetry. All old-timers remember the thrill they got from his ode to George written shortly after the Prophet's tragic death in 1897. It was in the nineties, I believe, that he and others started the *Nation Single Taxer*, which became the *Single Tax Review* and is now LAND AND FREEDOM. Journalism was his vocation for a half century. I can recall but two books I