

George's article  
begin (affair only)  
on p 2.

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This ought to appear.  
As good as Roy or  
C.G.

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REMARKABLE PROPHECY. - 1868

"WHAT THE RAILROADS WILL BRING US."

An Article Written in 1868 by Henry George, Re-  
printed in the San Francisco "Examiner"  
in 1893.

October 8, 1894, the Chicago "Times" said: "Some California man with a taste for statistics has made public the interesting estimate that the land grants held by the Southern Pacific railroad would make a belt around the world half a mile wide. The San Francisco "Examiner," however, condemns this estimate as too moderate, and proves that the land grants to that road in California alone would make a strip 800 feet wide from the earth to the moon, or a belt around the world at the equator one and one-fourth miles wide. But the day is not far distant when the people will regain for themselves this noble empire which their representatives stupidly gave away to a mercenary, profit-seeking corporation."

This statement lends peculiar interest to the following, which we get from the "Dust from the Literary Placers" page of the San Francisco "Examiner" of a year ago, and which has that deep, thoughtful tone so characteristic of Mr. George's writings:

Henry George, the noted political economist, was a California newspaper man. He was born in Philadelphia in 1839, and came to this state in 1858. He had been a sailor, but decided to remain in San Francisco, and after a time became a writer for the press. He was a reporter on the San Francisco "Chronicle," and later editor of the "Post." His great book, "Progress and Poverty," published in 1879,

while he was a resident of San Francisco, made him famous the world over. In 1880 he moved to New York. In 1886 he was the candidate of the United States Labor party for Mayor of New York. He received 68,110 votes, against 90,552 for Abram S. Hewitt, the Democratic nominee, and 60,435 for Theodore Roosevelt, the Republican candidate. In 1868, the year before the overland railroad was finished, he wrote for the "Overland Monthly" a remarkable prophecy upon the effect of the building of the railroad.

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Upon the plains this season railroad building is progressing with a rapidity never known before. The two companies, in their struggle for the enormous bounty offered by the Government, are shortening the distance between the lines of rail at the rate of from seven to nine miles per day - almost as fast as the ox teams which furnished the primitive method of conveyance across the continent could travel. Possible, by the middle of next spring, and certainly, we are told, before midsummer comes again, this "greatest work of the ages," will be completed and an unbroken track stretched from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Though as a piece of engineering the building of this road may not deserve the superlative terms in which, with American proneness to exaggerate, it is frequently spoken of, yet, when the full effects of its completion are considered, it seems the "greatest work of the age," indeed. Even the Suez canal, which will almost change the front of Europe and divert the course of commerce of half the world, is, in this view, not to be compared with it, for this railroad will not merely open a new route across the continent, but it will be the means of converting a wilderness into a populous empire in less time

then many of the cathedrals and palaces in Europe were building, and in unlocking treasure vaults which will flood the world with the precious metals. \* \* \* \* \*

What is the railroad to do for us - this railroad that we have looked for, hoped for, prayed for so long?

Much as the matter has been thought about and talked about, many as have been the speeches made and the newspaper articles written on the subject, there are probably but few of us who comprehend all it will do. We are so used to the California of the stage coach, widely separated from the rest of the world, that we can hardly realize what the California of the railroad will be - the California netted with iron tracks, and almost as near, in point of time, to Chicago and St. Louis as Virginia City was to San Francisco, when the Washoe excitement first commenced, or as Red Bluff is now.

The sharpest sense of Americans - the keen sense of gain which certainly does not lose its keenness in our bracing air - is the first to realize what is coming with our railroads. All over the State land is appreciated; fortunes are being made in a day by buying and parceling out Spanish ranches; the government surveyors and registrar are busy; speculators are grappling the public domain by the hundreds of thousands of acres, while for miles in every direction around San Francisco ground is being laid off into homestead lots. The spirit of speculation doubles, trebles, quadruples the past growth of the city in its calculations, and then discounts the result, confident that there still remains a margin. And it is not far wrong. The new era will be one of great material prosperity, if material prosperity means more people, more houses, more farms and mines, more factories

and ships. Calculations based on the future growth of San Francisco can hardly be wild. \* \* \* \*

The new era into which our state is about entering - or, perhaps, to speak more correctly, has already entered - is, without doubt, an era of steady, rapid and substantial growth. Yet we cannot hope to escape the great law of compensation which exacts some loss for every gain. And as there are but few of us who, could we but retrace our lives, retaining the knowledge that we have gained would pass from childhood into youth and from youth into manhood, with unmixed feelings, so we imagine that if the genius of California, whom we picture on the shield of our state, were really a sentient being, she would not look forward now entirely without regret. The California of the new era will be greater, richer, more powerful than the California of the past; but will she be still the same California whom her adopted children, gathered from all climes, love better than their own motherlands; from which all who have lived within her bounds are proud to hail; to which all who have known her long to return? She will have more people; but among those people will there be so large a proportion of full, true men? She will have more wealth; but will it be so evenly distributed? She will have more luxury and refinement and culture; but will she have such general comfort, so little squalor and misery; so little of the grinding, hopeless poverty that chills and cramps the souls of men and converts them into brutes?

The California of the future, the California of the new era, will be a better country for some classes than the California of the present, and so, too, it must be a worse country for others. Which of these classes will be the largest? Are there more mill owners or

factory operators in Lancashire? More brown-stone mansions than tenement-rooms in New York?

It is certain that the tendency of the new era, of the more dense population and more thorough development of the wealth of the state, will be to reduction both of the rate of interest and the rate of wages, particularly the latter. This tendency may not, probably will not, be shown immediately, but it will be before long, and that powerfully, unless balanced and counteracted by other influences which we are not now considering, which do not yet appear, and which it is probable will not appear for some time.

As a general rule - liable, of course, to exceptions - those who have not, it will make it more difficult to get. What, for instance, does the rise in land means? Several things, but certainly and prominently this, that it will be harder in future for a poor man to get a homestead lot. And so in San Francisco the rise in building lots means it will be harder for a poor man to get a house and lot for himself, and if he has none that he will have to yield more of his earnings for rent; means a crowding of the poorer classes together, and signifies courts, slums, tenement-houses, squalor and vice.

The locomotive is a great centralizer; it kills little towns and builds up cities, and in the same way kills little businesses and builds up great ones. We have had comparatively but few rich men; no very rich ones in the meaning "very rich" as in these times, but the process is going on, nor is it worth while to shut our eyes to the effect of this concentration of wealth. One millionaire involves the existence of just so many poor men. It is the great tree and the

*L* saplings over again. We need not look far from the palace to find the hovel. When liveries appear look out for barefooted children. A few liveries are now to be seen in our streets; we think their appearance coincides in date with the establishment of the almshouse. They are few, plain and modest now; they will grow more numerous and gaudy, and then we will not wait long for the children, their corollaries.

While we have had no very rich class, we have had no really poor class. There have been enough "dead brokes," and how many Californians are there who have not gone through that experience? But there never was a better country to be "broke" in, and where almost every man, even the most successful, had been in the same position, it did not involve the humiliation and loss of hope which attaches to utter poverty in older and more settled communities.

The honest miner of the placers has passed away in California. The Chinaman, the mill owner and his laborers, the mining superintendent and his gang, are his successors.

However, we shall have some real social gains with some that are only apparent. We shall have fewer shooting and stabbing affrays, but we will probably have something worse from which hitherto we have been exempt, thank God - the low, brutal, cowardly rowdyism of Eastern cities. We shall hear less of highway robberies in the mountains, but more, perhaps, of pick-pockets, burglars and sneakthieves.

That we can look forward to any political improvement is, to say the least, doubtful. In San Francisco, the political future is full of danger. In the growth of large corporations and other special interests there is an element of great danger. Of these great corpora-

tions and interests we shall have many. Look, for instance, at the Central Pacific railway as it will be, with a line running to Salt Lake, controlling more capital and employing more men than any of the great Eastern railroads, who manage legislatures as they manage their workshops, and name governors, senators and judges almost as they name their own engineers and clerks! Can we rely upon sufficient intelligence, independence and virtue among the many to resist the political effects of the concentration of great wealth in the hands of a few? And this, in general, is the tendency of the time and of the new era opening before us; To the great development of wealth; to concentration; to the differentiation of classes; to less personal independence among the many and the greater power of the few. We shall lose much that gave a charm to California; much that was valuable in the character of our people, while we will also wear off defects and gain some things that we lack.

A great change is coming over our state. We should not prevent it if we could, and could not if we would, but we can view it in all its bearings - look at the dark as well as the bright side and endeavor to hasten that which is good and retard or prevent that which is bad. A great state is forming; let us see to it that its foundations are laid firm and true.

And as California becomes populous and rich, let us not forget that the character of the people ~~of the people~~ counts for more than their numbers; that the distribution of wealth is even a more important matter than its production. Let us not imagine ourselves in a fool's paradise, where the golden apples will drop into our mouths;

let us not think that after the stormy seas and head gales of all the ages our ship has at last struck the trade winds of time. The future of our state, of our nation, of our race, looks fair and bright; perhaps the future looked so to the philosophers who once sat in the porches of Athens - to the unremembered men who raised the cities whose ruins lie south of us. Our modern civilization strikes broad and deep and looks high. So did the tower which men once built almost unto heaven.

Nov. 15, 1894.