

*The*  
 American Journal of  
 ECONOMICS  
*and*  
 SOCIOLOGY

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# *The* AMERICAN JOURNAL of ECONOMICS *and* SOCIOLOGY

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## Henry George: The 'Progress and Poverty' Period\*

By ANNA GEORGE DE MILLE

### I

#### The "Gas Measurer"

HAVING TO PART with *The San Francisco Evening Post* was a sorrow to Henry George. But he was not given to self-pity. Next day he wrote to John Swinton, special writer on *The New York Sun*:

It is all in a lifetime, and I have seen too much to think I can certainly tell what is good and what is evil fortune. Perhaps this "will be the making of me." Anyhow I gained valuable experience—or experience that will be valuable if I don't forget all about it. . . .

Now instead of asking you to write for me, I have to ask you if you know of any Eastern papers for which I could write. I must make a living, and do not feel like going to work for any of my newspaper rivals here. Of matters in this end of the world I am probably better informed than most of the people who correspond with your papers.<sup>1</sup>

A few weeks later he wrote again to Swinton, explaining why he was through with San Francisco journalism:

They look on me as a pestilential agrarian and communist and will avoid what they call my hobbies. But they do not know it, the very aggressiveness and radicalism of *The Post* was its strength. In making a paper that will not affect gunny bags, they will kill it as you will in time see. . . . I ran *The Post* for four years lacking a week, and successfully. If I never do anything more I have the satisfaction of knowing that I have perceptibly affected public thought and planted ideas which will some day bloom into action. As for being depressed I am not—twenty-four hours are enough for me to cry over spilt milk.<sup>2</sup>

George had aided in the election of William S. Irwin as Governor of California. Mr. Irwin, after assuming the Governorship, named George to an appointive post, State Inspector of Gas Meters. The erstwhile editor was grateful for the pay that went with the sinecure. But it became

\* Copyright, 1943, by Anna George de Mille. A section of a previously unpublished study, "Citizen of the World"; see *AM. JOUR. ECON. SOCIO.*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (April, 1942), p. 283n. Previously published studies in Mrs. de Mille's series are "Henry George: Childhood and Early Youth," *ib.*; "Henry George: Early California Period," 1, 4 (July, 1942), pp. 431ff.; "Henry George: The Formative Years," 2, 1 (October, 1942), pp. 97ff.; "Henry George: The Dedication Period," 2, 2 (January, 1943), pp. 231ff.; and "Henry George, the Editor," 2, 3 (April, 1943), pp. 377ff.

<sup>1</sup> Nov. 28, 1875. In the Henry George Collection, New York Public Library (hereafter abbreviated as HGC).

<sup>2</sup> Dec. 2, 1875, HGC.

monotonous work for a man of his temperament—going from house to house testing meters and fastening brass seals on those that met the legal requirements. His reduced income, moreover, required him to curtail drastically his living expenses. However, he penned a cheerful and reassuring account of his adjustment to his new station to his father some four months after he, with the assistance of his brother, Val, had taken up the new position:

The feeling here among Democrats seems strong for Tilden, tho for my part I think if anything I should prefer Thurman. I took no part in the Convention. I think as a general rule State Conventions are good things to keep out of. But I want to take part in the campaign. I have done writing enough and now I propose to see if I cannot do a little speaking. I don't want to go back to the newspaper business for some time to come. I have started in to read law, and intend to employ my leisure in that way as much as I can, and before my term of office is out get admitted to the bar. It will be a good thing for me, even if I never practice, but I believe if I stick at it I will ultimately do well at the profession. This office is good to hold while I get a little money; but the next one I go for will be one of prominence and honor.

I should very much like to get on this summer; but if the way to do it does not seem clear I will not repine. God has been too good. There has been no period in my life when I felt so contented and happy. I do not have to work hard; I am gradually getting on a sound financial basis, and can look forward to a reasonable probability of having enough to take care of myself and all whom it is my duty to look out for. . . .<sup>3</sup>

During this break in his journalistic career, George found his family a great consolation. He indicated this in the same letter:

. . . In all this Pacific Coast, yes in all the United States—there is no happier home than mine. It is now nearly fifteen years since Annie and I were married, and we are more lovers today than we were then, while our three children are nothing but pleasure and pride.

The boys in school nickname Harry the orator. They are always glad to hear him speak. His last piece is Mark Anthony's address over the dead body of Caesar. He recites it splendidly, not like a parrot, but with fervor and meaning.<sup>4</sup> Dick recited for me the other night almost the whole of "Horatius" and that is a very long poem; while little Jen, not to be outdone, recited "The Night Before Christmas." . . . The boys know more of Shakespeare than I did at twenty-five and are fast picking up, without any strain, a knowledge of history, etc.

The ambition of writing a book that would claim attention was not yet developed in him. He had his eyes fixed on public life; but he did not

<sup>3</sup> From Western House, Marysville, Calif., May 26, 1876. (In the private collection of the writer.)

<sup>4</sup> Henry George, Jr., won only second prize in the elocution contest at school, however; his classmate David Warfield, who was to make his career in the theatre, won first.

yet know he was to come before the public as an author. His personal insecurity still dominated his thinking:

If it were not for the embarrassed way in which I got out of *The Post* there would be no difficulty about our coming to the Centennial [Exposition] in style.<sup>5</sup> But I can see my way clear now and don't propose to get in debt again. I have never been an improvident or a reckless man. I have always had some main object in view, and have always worked my way steadily nearer and nearer to it. Money has never been my main object—but position which was to be my capital. Now I want to concentrate, get fixed easily as to money matters and study and think, and then when I get ready I will come permanently before the public again in some way or other.<sup>6</sup>

As inspector of gas meters he was obliged to travel about the State. On his trips he made interesting personal contacts and was able to acquaint himself with local conditions. The hours for inspection were necessarily short; his job allowed him time not only to read law but to do some writing. He wrote articles for *The Sacramento Bee*, took an active interest in the work of the Legislature, and entered vigorously into the Tilden-Hayes campaign.

His first speech for Tilden, whom he believed to be a free trader, was delivered before a large and distinguished audience in Dashaway Hall. It was not an extemporaneous political harangue, but was a carefully-prepared analysis of economic conditions; he considered the "contest to be a solemn, momentous inquiry, demanding from each voter a conscientious judgment."<sup>7</sup> He read it slowly and with deliberation. A few sentences show its tenor:

The federal tax-gatherer is everywhere. In each exchange by which labor is converted into commodities, there he is, standing between buyer and seller to take his toll. Whether it be a match or a locomotive, a dish-cloth or a dress, a new book or a glass of beer, the tax-gatherer steps in. . . .<sup>8</sup> He sketched vividly the social conditions of the time:

See seventy thousand men out of work in the Pennsylvania coal-fields; fifty thousand laborers asking for bread in the city of New York; the almshouses of Massachusetts crowded to repletion in the summertime; unemployed men roving over the West in great bands, stealing what they cannot earn. . . . It is an ominous thing that in this Centennial year, States

<sup>5</sup> The Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876.

<sup>6</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> "The Question Before the People," delivered on Aug. 15, 1876, before the Tilden-Hendricks Central Club. See scrapbook TIQB, p. v. 3, no. 6, HGC. Quoted in part by Henry George, Jr., "The Life of Henry George," New York, Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, pp. 266-8.

<sup>8</sup> *Ib.*

that a century ago were covered by the primeval forest should be holding conventions to consider the "tramp nuisance"—the sure symptom of that leprosy of nations, chronic pauperism. . . . What can any change of men avail so long as the policy which is the primary cause of these evils is unchanged?"

Such a success was this discourse that it was printed and used as a campaign document. In spite of George's lack of oratorical training, he was invited to "stump" the state. This gave him a reputation as a speaker and he was asked to deliver the final address of the campaign.

The failure of the campaign did not depress him, for his personal fortunes had risen in spite of it. He wrote his mother:

Whether I go into politics, into the law or into the newspaper business again . . . I do not intend to rest here; but to go ahead step by step. . . . I propose to read and study; to write some things which will expand my reputation. and perhaps to deliver some lectures with the same view. And if I live, I shall make myself known even in Philadelphia. I aim high.

So far as my personal interests are concerned, defeat is as good as a sweeping victory—in fact, I think better, as a man of my kind has a chance of coming forward more rapidly in a minority than in a majority party. However, about all such things, I am disposed to think that whatever happens is for the best. Talent and energy can nearly always convert defeats into victories.<sup>9</sup>

There had been no chair of political economy at the University of California. The university authorities planned to establish one, and Henry George was suggested for the place. On this account, he was invited to deliver several lectures at Berkeley before the students and faculty.

He accepted with alacrity, for to teach economics at a college was one of his dreams. He took much care with the preparation of the first lecture, "The Study of Political Economy." It ran about 5000 words. In the paper he made no attempt to expound his own theories about how the unequal distribution of wealth might be corrected; he contented himself with arguing that this branch of learning was vitally important because it

. . . concerns itself with matters which among us occupy more than nine tenths of human effort, and perhaps nine tenths of human thought. In its province are included all that relates to the wages of labor and the earnings of capital; all regulations of trade; all questions of currency and finance; all taxes and public disbursements—in short, everything that can in any way affect the amount of wealth which a community can secure, or the proportion in which that wealth will be distributed between individuals. . . .

But George was not concerned merely with defining the scope of the science. He stressed its intimate connection with public policy. The ad-

<sup>9</sup> *Ib.*

<sup>10</sup> Nov. 13, 1876, HGC. Quoted in part by Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 271.

dress was notable for its simple but forceful expression of what later came to be known in economics as the welfare point-of-view:

If you trace out the laws of the production and exchange of wealth, you will see the causes of social weakness and disease in enactments which selfishness has imposed on ignorance, and in maladjustments entirely within our own control.

And you will see the remedies. Not in wild dreams of red destruction nor weak projects for putting them in leading-strings to a brainless abstraction called the State, but in simple measures sanctioned by justice. You will see in light the great remedy, in freedom the great solvent. You will see that the true law of social life is the law of love, the law of liberty, the law of each for all and all for each; that the golden rule of morals is also the golden rule of the science of wealth; that the highest expressions of religious truth include the widest generalizations of political economy.<sup>11</sup>

The students seemed to like the lecture. By the faculty, generally, however, its reception was polite but chilly. George surmised that we would not be invited to appear at the University of California again. And to his deep regret, he was not. As it turned out, he suffered no loss; but the institution did. "The University of California missed the chance to have what would have been its most famous professor."<sup>12</sup> The university board evidently sensed in the man, who himself had quit formal schooling before the age of fourteen, a fearless contempt for the "paraphernalia of learning,"<sup>13</sup> a dislike of pedantry and a firm conviction of a necessary relation between knowledge and power, thought and action, which would disqualify him in the eyes of defenders of the status quo.

Whatever the motives that influenced the board in ending its consideration of George as a candidate for the chair, his friendships with John LeConte, president of the university; with Joseph LeConte, the physicist, the president's brother; with William Swinton, brother of John Swinton, whose field was belles-lettres, and with others of the faculty were not affected.

A few months after his appearance at Berkeley, George was chosen by a group of citizens of San Francisco to be the orator of the day at a Fourth of July celebration in the California Theatre. The place was crowded. George's address was scholarly, but too long. Once again, however, it gave evidence of his foresight. He anticipated the currents that were to bring

<sup>11</sup> Delivered on March 9, 1877, the lecture was first published in *The Popular Science Monthly*, March, 1880. It has since been reprinted many times in pamphlet form. Cf. "The Writings of Henry George," New York, Doubleday, McClure, 1901, Vol. IX, p. 135.

<sup>12</sup> Miriam Allen de Ford, "They Were San Franciscans," Caldwell, Idaho, Caxton Printers, 1941, p. 129.

<sup>13</sup> "The Study of Political Economy," *loc. cit.*

the English-speaking nations together in international affairs and to produce efforts for a society of nations as an instrument for outlawing war:

Is it too soon to hope . . . that it may be the mission of this Republic to unite all the nations of English speech, whether they grow beneath the Northern Star or Southern Cross, in a league which, by insuring justice, promoting peace, and liberating commerce, will be the fore-runner of a world-wide federation that will make war the possibility of a past age, and turn to works of usefulness the enormous forces now dedicated to destruction.<sup>14</sup>

Ending with an apostrophe to liberty, the oration was an occasion of wonder to his friends and of commendation from most of the newspapers. The critics were not unanimous in praise, however. *The News Letter* stated that the "gas measurer . . . kindly spoke for several hours on the Goddess of Liberty and other school reader topics."<sup>15</sup>

The political star of the "gas measurer" was still rising. A group of workingmen who were strongly anti-Chinese urged him to accept the nomination for State Senator. But now the urge to write was on him again and he declined. After the day's meter inspections were done, he read history and wrote an inquiry into recurring industrial depressions. When the essay was finished, he read it to his friend, Edward Robson Taylor.

Taylor, a doctor of medicine as well as of laws, was one year older than George. He had served as purser on a Sacramento River steamboat, had set type and written for a newspaper, had been private secretary to Governor Haight, and was now the latter's law partner.<sup>16</sup> He wrote good verse and was a lover of the arts. Among his intimate friends were authors, artists and actors of note.

Dr. Taylor was greatly impressed by George's analysis of the coincidence of progress and want. George wished to give the essay to a magazine. Taylor urged him, instead, to expand it into the book that James McClatchy, editor of *The Sacramento Bee*, had been begging him to do. George himself had realized, after he had finished "Our Land and Land Policy" in 1871, that some day he would have to write a longer book in order to work out his views systematically. Now, in this lull in the press of personal concerns, after six years of newspaper work and study of public affairs, the time to write that book had come.

<sup>14</sup> "The American Republic, Its Dangers and Possibilities," in "The Writings of Henry George," *op. cit.*, Vol. IX, p. 157.

<sup>15</sup> Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 288.

<sup>16</sup> After the great earthquake of 1896, he served a term as Mayor of San Francisco. Later he became dean of the law school at the University of California.



On September 18th, 1877, he wrote in his diary:

"Commenced '*Progress and Poverty*.'" <sup>17</sup>

2

### The Message

THE WHOLE COUNTRY, in the winter of 1877-8, seemed to be passing through a period of severe business depression. In several of the eastern states railroad strikes occurred and, after riots had broken out, troops were called in to restore order. In California, drought injured the crops; the output of the mines was reduced, and at this low ebb in the state's resources the Central Pacific Railroad undertook to reduce wages. Under the strain, in California as elsewhere, there were many financial crises and banking collapses.

For the family of the inspector of gas meters this meant hard times. Henry George's income had grown appreciably smaller. The Georges had to move to cheaper quarters and to cut down expenses at every other point. To help eke out a living, George turned to seeking paid lecture engagements. A group of his friends, who had adopted his ideas of social reform, formed themselves into an association which they called the Land Reform League of California. This was the pioneer organization devoted to the propagation of his teachings. One of the first things the group did was to arrange a lecture by their leader. George stopped work on his book to write the address.

In their enthusiasm, George's friends rented Metropolitan Temple, a huge auditorium, for the occasion. The audience was disappointingly small, and in the vast hall it was swallowed up. George was keenly aware of the importance of the doctrines he was expounding and of his responsibility for launching them; and he was self-conscious about his lacks, in training and natural gifts, as a speaker. The whole situation gave him a paralyzing attack of stage fright. Although he conquered this nervousness he read, none too convincingly, his discussion of "Why Work Is Scarce, Wages Low and Labor Restless."<sup>18</sup> In it he voiced a prophecy:

The standard that I have tried to raise tonight may be torn by prejudice and blackened by calumny; it may now move forward, and again be forced back. But once loosed, it can never again be furled. . . .<sup>19</sup>

The meeting was a bitter disappointment; his plea for an awakening to truth, as he saw it, fell upon few ears, and, for the most part, deaf ones.

<sup>17</sup> See George's Diaries, HGC.

<sup>18</sup> March 26, 1878.

<sup>19</sup> HGC, Scrapbook TIQB, p. v. 3; Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 296.

The lecture caused little stir in San Francisco. Undaunted he repeated it in other parts of the state and there he had somewhat better results. It was an ambitious undertaking, and, as he wrote John Swinton,

an attempt to put into popular form a great truth which marries political economy with common sense, and which once appreciated is the key to all the social problems of our time. Of course the exigencies of a popular lecture prevent the exhibition of the truth in its full form, but the clue is there which can be worked out by any one who will catch it.

It is of course a most unsatisfactory thing to publish anything on the circumference instead of at the center of thought, and I some time ago, made up my mind not to do it, but the necessities of the time have compelled me.

The seed that I have for years been sowing is springing up on every hand. I have made to principle sacrifices that were very bitter, but in my own time, I can see what at first I never expected to see, the result of my work. Where I stood alone thousands now stand with me. The leaven is at work. And there can be but one result. But the struggle will be long and fierce. It is now only opening.<sup>20</sup>

For all George's disappointment over the Metropolitan Temple meeting, for all his self-consciousness as an apprentice public speaker, there were some friends at least, who saw in him the oratorical talents that later were to win him recognition as one of the great platform performers of his time. Several months later, the Young Men's Hebrew Association was formed by a group of San Franciscans and they invited George to address them at their first gathering. He did so, delivering a lecture, "Moses," which he had written especially for the occasion. It proved to be the first of several of his minor papers to win a permanent place in American belles-lettres, not for the novelty of its ideas, but for the grace of their expression:

"No man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." But while the despoiled tombs of the Pharaohs mock the vanity that reared them, the name of the Hebrew who, revolting from their tyranny, strove for the elevation of his fellowmen, is yet a beacon light to the world.

Leader and servant of men! Law-giver and benefactor! Toiler toward the promised land seen only by the eye of faith! Type of the high souls who in every age have given to earth its heroes and its martyrs, whose deeds are the precious possession of the race, whose memories are its sacred heritage! With whom among the founders of empire shall we compare him?

To dispute about the inspiration of such a man were to dispute about words. From the depths of the unseen such characters must draw their strength; from fountains that flow only from the pure in heart must come their wisdom. . . .

<sup>20</sup> San Francisco, June 2, 1878, HGC.

The discourse marked the maturity of George's style.

His enthusiasm for the Biblical leader arose from a feeling of kinship with him:

Moses saw that the real cause of the enslavement of the masses of Egypt was what has everywhere produced enslavement, the possession by a class of the land upon which and from which the whole people must live.<sup>21</sup>

The address was no mere propaganda talk. Into it George put the solid learning of the family fireside Bible study circle in Philadelphia and of his later reading, developing a eulogy of the religious teacher as a living moral leader, and an exposition and critique of our heritage from his times, the Mosaic code:

Everywhere in the Mosaic institutions is the land treated as the gift of the Creator to His common creatures, which no one has the right to monopolize. Everywhere it is, not your estate, or your property, not the land which you bought, or the land which you conquered, but "the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee"—"the land which the Lord lendeth thee." And by practical legislation, by regulations to which he gave the highest sanctions, he tried to guard against the wrong that converted ancient civilizations into despotisms. . . .<sup>22</sup>

Yet, for an understanding of George as a social student, it is interesting to observe that in this essay he did not sacrifice practicality for eloquence. Amidst the glowing passages he struck the note that was to mark his approach, insisting in the common sense way that later was to win him a wide hearing:

I do not say that those institutions were, for their ultimate purpose, the very best that might even then have been devised, for Moses had to work with the tools that came to his hand, and upon materials as he found them. Still less do I mean to say that forms suitable for that time and people are suitable for every time and people. I ask not veneration of the form, but recognition of the spirit.<sup>23</sup>

The audience was deeply moved. Dr. Taylor was inspired, too, by the beauty of the preachment. It led him to urge, however, that there be no more interruptions of George's work on his book.

It was interrupted, nevertheless, for the writing of occasional timely

<sup>21</sup> It was delivered early in June, 1878. The ms., entitled "Moses, or Leader of the Exodus," galley proofs, and a printed copy, cut and corrected, are in Box V, HGC. In pamphlet form the essay has gone through many editions in various parts of the world and it is found in several collections. For the definitive edition, currently, see that published by the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, New York, or the Henry George Foundation of Great Britain, London, or the Henry George Foundation of Australia, Melbourne.

<sup>22</sup> *Ib.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ib.*

articles and for the organization and establishment of the Free Public Library of San Francisco, which later, with its branches, was to become the most complete library west of the Rockies.<sup>24</sup> Henry George was the first secretary of the original board of trustees. The early minutes of the board were inscribed in the same blue ink which he was using in writing his manuscript.

But the chief interruption came when George ran for delegate to the convention to be held for the general amendment of the State Constitution. Knowing that if he were elected he might succeed in having written into the laws of California his proposal for the taxation of land values, he issued an appeal of less than a thousand words, "To the Voters of San Francisco." It was a trenchant statement of his idea:

. . . Holding that an aristocracy of wealth is even more pernicious than an aristocracy of birth, that the system which puts the livelihood of one man into the power of another is as truly slavery as that which makes property of the person; that political corruption is more potent than armies for the destruction of liberty; and that justice is the only firm foundation of the State, I shall endeavor, as I have power, to so amend the Constitution—

That the weight of taxation may be shifted from those who . . . produce wealth to those who merely appropriate it, so that the monopoly of land and water may be destroyed . . . and an end be put to the shameful state of things which compels men to beg who are willing to work.<sup>25</sup>

The Land Reform League worked vigorously in his behalf. Both the Democratic party and the Workingman's party nominated him. With these groups pledged to support him, he seemed certain of election until, at the Workingman's party ratification meeting, he was asked to acknowledge the leadership of the political boss, Dennis Kearney, and to accept his platform. Several planks of the Kearney platform George vigorously opposed. He refused to have any man his master, to think for him. He almost shouted, "No!" His speech was hissed, his nomination revoked. At the polls the Democratic ticket was beaten. George, however, received more votes than any other candidate of the party.

The nomad family had now moved to a pleasant old house on First Street, near Harrison,<sup>26</sup> situated on the crest of the hill and commanding a sweeping view of the South Bay. They were forced by their circumstances to live in the simplest manner. There were debts and difficulties

<sup>24</sup> The law providing for such libraries was passed in 1878; see Mr. Stephen Potter's "Reminiscences," in the private collection of the writer.

<sup>25</sup> San Francisco, May 3, 1879, HGC.

<sup>26</sup> It was on the spot where the Oakland Bridge now begins.



Where "Progress and Poverty" Was Written: Henry George's home in 1878-9 at 417 First Street, San Francisco. From a photograph by J. J. Thomas of Auckland, N. Z., May 7, 1902, in the writer's possession. (The man shown is an unidentified bystander).

and sacrifices; but these financial troubles did not touch the happiness they found in one another.

The room in which George worked, although it was cluttered with books and papers, was spacious and cheery.<sup>27</sup> Its three large windows looked out on hills and bay, on boats of all kinds and on swirling sea gulls. A large table in the center served as a desk, and it was here that he wrote. Most of his reading or deep thinking was done as he stretched out on the lounge, although often, when pondering some point, he would pace the floor, or stand at a window, gazing into the distant hills, humming a tune the while and beating a rhythm on the pane with his fingers.

This proximity to the water was a joy to Henry George. On the long summer evenings he would walk down to the wharf, hire a sail boat and, with his two boys, go skimming over the waters until dark. Sometimes they would take their young cousin, Will McCloskey, along. On one of these occasions George, as skipper, sailed them around the old government tender *Snubrick*, the side-wheeler on which he had travelled west. Weathered and battered she was now, and ready for Davy Jones's locker.<sup>28</sup>

By the time George had completed his book, his oldest child, Henry, Jr., had finished grammar school. The boy then became his father's amanuensis. Mrs. George had a share in the work, checking the "fair" with the working copy of the manuscript. The friends, of whom there were many, and each of variant type and opinion, gave him encouragement by their faith and belief in him. All in the loyal group, probably shared Dr. Taylor's opinion that here was a book in the making that was going to mean something for the betterment of humanity.

At last, in March, 1879, nearly a year and a half after George had started it, the book was completed. He had thought to call it "Must Progress Bring Poverty," or "Wealth and Want"; he ended by entitling it "Progress and Poverty." He was not wholly satisfied; he felt that it covered "too wide a scope for one volume,"<sup>29</sup> and that the part relating to the development of civilization was but a skeleton of the thought he wanted to present. "But at least an outline seemed to me essential, and I did not know, even if I lived, if I should ever find opportunity to write again."<sup>30</sup> But he found satisfaction in it. On the night when he finished

<sup>27</sup> Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 301, and letter to the writer from Wm. Cleveland McCloskey, San Francisco, May 14, 1927.

<sup>28</sup> McCloskey, *loc. cit.*

<sup>29</sup> Letter to Charles Nordhoff, Dec. 21, 1879, HGC; quoted by Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, pp. 327-9.

<sup>30</sup> *Ib.*

the final chapter, he later recalled: "I felt that the talent intrusted to me had been accounted for—felt more fully satisfied, and more deeply grateful than if all the kingdoms of the earth had been laid at my feet."<sup>31</sup>

The depth of his purpose, the purity of his dedication, however, were only revealed after his death, when the Rev. Thomas Dawson, an Oblate of Glencree, Ireland, made public a letter the author had written him on February 1st, 1883. In it, George shared a confidence:

Because you are not only my friend, but a priest and a religious, I shall say something that I don't like to speak of—that I never before have told to any one. Once, in daylight, and in a city street, there came to me a thought, a vision, a call—give it what name you please. But every nerve quivered. And then and there I made a vow. Through evil and through good, whatever I have done and whatever I have left undone, to that I have been true. It was that that impelled me to write "Progress and Poverty" and that sustained me when else I should have failed. And when I had finished the last page, in the dead of night, when I was entirely alone, I flung myself on my knees and wept like a child. The rest was in the Master's hands. That is a feeling that has never left me; that is constantly with me. It has made me a better and purer man. It has been to me a religion, strong and deep, though vague—a religion of which I never like to speak, or make any outward manifestation, but yet that I try to follow. . . .<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Preface to "Science of Political Economy," London, Henry George Foundation, p. viii.

<sup>32</sup> See A. G. de Mille, "Henry George: the Dedication Period," *op. cit.*, p. 235n.

## Cabinet vs. Presidential Government

WE ARE RIGHTFULLY PROUD of our country's rôle as the "arsenal of democracy," but the Washington political scene evokes an appropriate humility. The bickering between the President and the Congress is gloomily accepted by the American people as one of the crosses they must bear if they would preserve their democratic institutions.

This defeatist attitude results from a gross ignorance of the democratic machinery in other lands, and a tendency to attribute our political ills to the malevolence of personal devils. All the other English-speaking democracies have chief executives who are in fact the choice of the majority of the legislative branch of government, and they continue in office only for so long as they retain the confidence of that majority. The experience of Britain, the Dominions and the Continental democracies shows that the Washington type of feud and confusion cannot exist under a system of parliamentary supremacy. Our system provides us with an executive who can neither control the Congress nor be controlled by it, and the resulting caterwaul is heard around the world.

Our plan of electing a President by popular vote has been adopted by few countries other than those in Latin America where its failure has been even more conspicuous than here. Wherever it has been tried it has led to conflicts between the executive and the legislative branches of government, and in Latin America that conflict has been frequently resolved by violence and the establishment of some kind of personal and irresponsible government.

The Chinese, after carefully examining the history of all the democratic nations, have provided in their draft constitution (Art. 32) that their Congress shall have the power both to elect and to recall their chief executive. Although this constitution cannot go into effect until peace is restored there can be no doubt that they will adopt the parliamentary rather than the presidential system.

Our failure to adopt the parliamentary system is in part due to our chauvinistic provincialism which precludes us from profiting from the experience of the rest of mankind. But even more it is due to the timidity of those who know how democracy can best function but are overawed by the political apathy and conservatism of the American people. Perhaps the continuing crisis in Washington will make us realize that our trouble is institutional and not personal. "Hating Roosevelt" is a practice which presumably affords some psychic satisfaction to those who indulge in it, but it is a poor substitute for a needed amendment to our Constitution.

GLENN E. HOOVER