

WITHIN the next five years, George made two more missionary excursions to England, one very brief, lasting only a couple of weeks, and followed closely by another which occupied three months. His activities were the same as before, and his experience was differentiated mostly by finding that his doctrines had enlisted the support of persons who were socially several cuts above those who had previously led in his meetings. He noted that those who now occupied the platform "to move the votes of thanks that are customary there on such occasions, were men who formerly would not have thought of being in such a place . . . the local notables, the file leaders—the active workers, as we here would say—of the Radical wing of the Liberal party." Even Mr. Chamberlain had decorously cast a sheep's eye at the principle of land-value taxation; Henry Labouchère and T. P. O'Connor had espoused it; and in a negative way it had been at least countenanced by the Lord Chief Justice of England.

George remarked this change of attitude and temper, but seemed not over-impressed by it, nor did he make it the occasion of a closer approach to persons of a more influential order; he apparently took it all as so much clear gain, more or less as lagniappe or "velvet," and went on with his enterprise of evangelizing the masses.

In 1890, the year after his last round of the British Isles, he went on a tour of New Zealand and Australia, where by that time he had come into great repute and urgent demand; his fiscal doctrine had gone a long way there. His wife, who was an Australian, went with him. He elected to go by way of San Francisco, the scene of their earlier life together. Coming back to California after ten years, bearing all the wreaths of laurel he had won in distant parts of the earth, he was received with a tremendous demonstration. Australia made so much of him that he remained there three months, during which he pretty well covered the country, speaking every day but one, and sometimes twice a day. He came back to New York by the long way around, eastward to India, thence up through the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, using the long sea-trip for recuperation after

his exhausting campaign. He left the ship at Brindisi, and made the hurried land-journey which has already been mentioned in these pages, through Italy, Switzerland and France to London. He made two speeches, one in London and one in Glasgow—he had but a day or two before his ship sailed—and he then bade England farewell forever.

II

Out of his short span of fifty-eight years, George spent approximately three years abroad and fifty-five in America; yet the result of his missionary endeavours was more solid and lasting in foreign parts than in his native land. In 1897 the British economist J. A. Hobson said that George might be considered as having exercised a more directly formative and educative influence over English radicalism since 1882 than any other man; which is no doubt true, but since 1897 that influence has evaporated. In America he was not wholly in the proverbial case of a prophet without honour in his own country, for in the course he laid out for himself he got great honour of a sort; but the course being what it was, the honour was special, in-

substantial and evanescent. Abroad, in the estimation of a considerable élite, the philosopher was fairly clearly marked off from the humanitarian, the philanthropist and the agitator, and was rated at somewhere near a proper value; while at home the character which entitles him to humanity's profound and permanent intellectual respect was overshadowed and lost to sight. So completely did it disappear under a mass of misunderstanding, ignorant misrepresentation, interested calumny and studied neglect—under the brute mass of what Ernest Renan so finely terms *le matérialisme vulgaire, la bassesse de l'homme intéressé*—that even the sympathetic memory of his self-immolation on the altar of his cause did not outlast his generation.

His procedure at home was the same which he employed abroad. His task was to "educate the masses" here as there; and in his belief that the masses are educable, his unshaken trust was in the old familiar methods of publicity, agitation, organization and political action. Never did he become aware that education is as much, even more, a matter of time as of anything else; that it is impossible to tell anybody anything unless, in a very real sense, he knows it already.

When he returned to New York in 1882 from his first visit to England, he at once repeated the experiment which had succeeded so well with British readers, by getting out a cheap paper-covered edition of his two books. At that time, before the United States went into an international-copyright agreement, Americans were quite accustomed to paper-bound books. Most people, probably, have heard of the "dime novel," the terror of anxious mothers, the ancestor of what we now know as Western pulps. Those advanced in years can remember also the excellent popular literature purveyed by the Franklin Square Library at forty cents, and by the Seaside Library and Lovell's Library at ten cents, twenty cents for "double numbers." These enterprises were hard on authors whose works were pirated without so much as a by-your-leave, but they did a great public service; they furnished many a child with the beginnings of a lasting love of literature. George got his pamphlet on the Irish land question into Lovell's Library at ten cents, and *Progress and Poverty* as a double number at twenty cents.

In 1883, George also helped to start an organization called the Free Soil Society; it had ambitious plans for branching out on a national

scale, but it did not "take" particularly, and died young. This was the second in a meandering string of organizations which mushroomed up out of George's fiscal scheme—the first one was the Land Reform League of California, already mentioned in these pages—and which soon quietly gave up an exiguous existence. He lectured here and there, and wrote much for popular publications on the social problems of the day. Many opportunities of the kind were open to him, and he had an added motive for embracing them because, as ever, he was in great need of money. He was perhaps the only author who ever lived whose books sold by the million in his own lifetime without yielding him so much as a decent living—at this very time he wrote a friend that "I have now just twenty-five dollars in the world." The proprietor of the *North American Review*, which was then seeing its best days, proposed starting a weekly under George's editorship, but George declined the offer, thinking the time for that had not yet come. Both in speaking and writing, his work was polemic, propagandist, popular in tone, constant to George's invariable aim at "educating the masses."

All this naturally tended to associate him in

the public mind not with the interests of the masses, but with what the public mind conceived those interests to be. It tended to pose him as a class-conscious proletarian publicist, and one is obliged to say, not without reason. Despite his assertion that in the long-time view he was not for any class, but for the abolition of classes through applying a policy of fundamental justice to all classes alike, the immediate incidence of his aims and sympathies was so obvious as to encourage misapprehensions out of which an interested antagonism might make anything it liked.

One thing which greatly helped to establish this misapprehension of George as only a class-conscious proletarian gonfalonier, was the discovery that something very close to his fiscal proposals was in the platform of the Knights of Labour, and had been there for some time. This organization was the parent of the American Federation; its principles were more radical and far more intelligent than those of its offspring; its leader was a man of considerable ability, named Terence V. Powderly. One of the statements in its declaration of principles was that—

The land, including all the natural sources of wealth, is the heritage of all the people, and should not be subject to speculative traffic. Occupancy and use should be the only title to the possession of land. Taxes should be levied upon its full value for use, exclusive of improvements, and should be sufficient to take for the community all unearned increment.

This was sound Georgian doctrine, even to the policy of "Thorough" set forth in the last clause. In fact, the words "for the community" hint at a local confiscation of rent, rather than at the disadvantageous policy of national confiscation which George contemplated; so to that extent they improve on him. How this plank got into the platform seems now to be unknown; it had lain long as a dead letter. There it was, however, and the Irish rent-war galvanized it into life. Powderly was Irish by descent; he made friends with George, pushed the cheap edition of his books throughout the organization, which by 1883 had covered the country and was at the height of its power. George joined the order. He had been a labour-union man in California, he was still a unionist in spirit, and moreover, he was a natural-born joiner; the spirit of organization was part of

every breath he drew. So quite without thought of expediency, he became a Knight of Labour; and thus circumstances combined with his natural predilections to edge him a little closer towards the apparent status of an Adullamite demagogue, a bell-wether of the disaffected.

III

Yet it was at this time that he began to consider taking his philosophical equipment out of storage for use on a new book, the one which finally came out two years later, called *Protection or Free Trade*. One might say, continuing the figure, that he went as far as to visit the warehouse two or three times, look his equipment over, test it out, and then put it away again, before actually taking it off the premises and setting it up for a job of steady work. In other words, he wrote a bit piecemeal on his book, interrupting his work on it several times with lectures, propagandist essays, a voyage to England, and a long reply to the Duke of Argyll's attack in the *Nineteenth Century*. George wanted to complete the book, meant to do it, and finally did it; but a sense of what he thought was his immediate and paramount duty

to the "cause" persistently blocked his progress, so that a year elapsed with little to show.

He meant the book to be timely, and so it was, although the final turn of public affairs was not quite so favourable to it as he expected. The tariff-question was uppermost at the time, and George thought Cleveland's election in 1884 would force it to a clear issue, but it did not; for while Cleveland sent a message to Congress advocating a lower tariff, he also made it clear that he was by no means for free trade, not even for the principle of free trade. He was for "tariff reform," which represented no principle whatever—it could be made to mean anything that anybody chose to make it mean—and was therefore congenial to the influential self-styled liberal element throughout the country, led by such publicists as Sumner, Beecher, Curtis, Godkin; and it was naturally and necessarily congenial to politicians who had an ear to the ground. After years of observation and experience, George still cherished the infatuated belief that a politician is capable of publicly and formally recognizing a principle; he remained unaware of the simple truth that if a politician were thus capable, he would not only cease to be a politician, but would not, and could not,

have become one in the first instance. Cleveland's message was a wet blanket on George, but he still had hopes of him on his second nomination in 1888; and when Cleveland was renominated and elected in 1892, George's hopes rose higher. Cleveland, however, suddenly shelved the tariff and made the currency the main issue on which his party took its stand. George was then through with Cleveland; he prophesied that in time to come, the philosophical historian would write of him "as more dangerous to the republic than any of his predecessors."

But George's book, coming out in 1885, was timely and useful, although as a profoundly philosophical work its permanent value of course far exceeds its value for the moment. In it he shows that freedom of exchange is not the isolated issue which politicians and publicists made it out to be, but is inextricably bound up with freedom of production. In fact, regarding it as an isolated issue, he showed that the protectionists must have pretty much the best of the argument. Ask an American free-trader of the "liberal" Sumner-Godkin type, who pointed to England as an example of free-trade practice, why it was that in free-trade England the la-

bouring classes were worse off than in protectionist Germany—what could he answer? He could not answer. The only answer is that in England the principle of free trade was not carried out to its full logical length. George expounded the development of this principle; he was the first to do so. He proved that free exchange, the mere abolition of customs and custom-houses, could do nothing for the labouring classes, nothing for society-at-large, nor indeed could it do anything worth doing for anybody, unless it were correlated with freedom of production. He then went on to show, as Turgôt and Franklin had shown long before, that freedom of production could exist only where the land stood in open competition with industry in the labour-market; and in this way his exposition came straight around to the fundamental principles set forth in *Progress and Poverty*. Thus he showed that there is actually no such thing as a tariff-problem, any more than there is actually such a thing as a labour-problem; the only actual problem is the land-problem, and if that were solved, these two apparent problems would immediately disappear. *Protection or Free Trade* was a magnificent achieve-

ment in social philosophy, and one which, like *Progress and Poverty*, has never been successfully impugned.

IV

Ever since 1879, George had in the back of his mind the idea of a work which should co-ordinate and cover the whole science of political economy. At first he thought of writing a simple primer. Latterly, in the intervals of dabbling at *Protection or Free Trade*, he considered taking Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, synopsising the parts irrelevant to "a clear understanding of Smith's economy," annotating it, and publishing it at a popular price. In this way, he said, "I think I could make an exceedingly useful volume, rendering Smith much more intelligible to the general reader, and pointing out where he goes astray and all his successors have followed him." But later still, with his philosophical instinct once more sharp-set by his labours on *Protection or Free Trade*, the idea which he had "long contemplated" came to the fore. At this time, however, an interruption occurred which was in every way lamentable; and to the last degree lamentable because it was fatal to any further philosophical enterprise,

and in its after-effects it was also fatal to him. A municipal election in New York City came on in 1886. Organized labour decided to go into the campaign with a ticket of its own, and pitched upon George as the likeliest vote-getter in sight, to be their candidate for the mayoralty.

It is a sordid story; sordid and squalid. George was reluctant to accept. His philosophical instinct prompted him against it; he told the first committee which waited on him that he had important work ahead which he would not willingly put off. He thought that ended the matter; indeed, at first he took the offer as more or less a compliment, very agreeable, but not to be regarded too seriously. He was in error about this, and should have known it at the outset; he should have known that he was being taken on because the labourites had no one else who could come anywhere near him in ability to attract votes. They told him that they would practically disregard the rest of their ticket and concentrate all their efforts on electing him; which in itself should have opened his eyes to the facts of the situation, but apparently it did not.

Failing in his first plea, he questioned the offer on prudential grounds. He said that there

had been a good deal of dissension, rivalry and squabbling in the unionist ranks when previous attempts were made to inject organized labour into politics. Yes, the committee told him, that was true, but everything was harmonious now, and all hands were looking to him as the only one who could give them the leadership they needed in their struggle to relieve the oppressed and succour the downtrodden. This had a good sound, but George still hesitated; he seemed to suspect that it might be a little overdrawn. He finally put it that if the unions would bring him a petition signed by thirty thousand *bona fide* voters, he would accept the nomination. They accordingly did so, and accordingly he accepted.

It is vain to wonder what good George could possibly have expected to accrue from his election to the mayoralty of New York; what he thought he could by the wildest, the most unpredictable peradventure possibly make out of such a position as that. He never made it clear just what his actual expectations were, or whether he had any. He said the one thing sure was that "if I go into the fight, the campaign will bring the land question into politics, and do more to popularize its discussion than years of writing would do." So much for the

campaign, but if elected, what then? His one proposal was to take the tax off buildings and put it on the land, exclusive of improvements; and this he would have found wholly impracticable, as anyone who had the slightest knowledge of the city's affairs could have told him. Perhaps he might have saved himself from the unfortunate step of accepting the nomination, if it had not been for the urgings of the friends he consulted, who were the very last persons competent to advise him. They were devotés of his person, energumens in his cause, who saw in a possible election the chance to make the mayoralty a beacon from which to spread the Light. Wiser persons on both sides of the Atlantic laboured with George, imploring him not to stultify himself so miserably, but all to no purpose. In accepting the nomination he said, "I believe, and have long believed, that workingmen ought to go into politics. I believe, and have long believed, that through politics was the way, and the only way, by which anything real and permanent could be secured for labour." It was a profession of faith wrought out, not by the philosopher of human freedom who said "I am for man," but by the Duke of Argyll's "prophet of San Francisco." As far as

the current public estimate of him was concerned, it put the seal of finality upon the character he had chosen to give himself. Thenceforth he was irrevocably committed to be known *semper, ubique et ab omnibus*, as no more than the political file-leader of a class, a labour-skate.

The campaign was filthy and scurrilous beyond expression. Before the nominations were made, George was approached by a seasoned emissary of Tammany Hall, named William M. Ivins, a municipal jobholder, and a man of considerable prominence in the city, who had some pretensions to character. He had a deal to propose, and was very frank about it, telling George some quite interesting things concerning the way elections were actually managed. George said he "insisted that I could not be elected mayor of New York, no matter how many people might vote for me. . . . He said I could not possibly be counted in." Ivins offered George a seat in Congress if he would decline the nomination to the mayoralty. Tammany and the County Democracy would take care of him; all he need do was to forget it. Under this arrangement, George said, "I should be at no expense whatever, but might go to

Europe or anywhere I willed, and when I came back should receive a certificate of election to the House of Representatives."

This was a pretty liberal offer. The mayoralty of New York was never a desirable place for a career-man; it was no stepping-stone to anything. On the other hand, assuming that George could have degenerated into the conventional type of politician, a break into Congress with the good-will of Tammany behind him—and Tammany never failed to do well by those who "went along"—meant an extremely good start for a man of George's ability. But why should Tammany be so keen to have George dodge the nomination? George put it to Ivins that if he could not be elected, as Ivins assured him he could not be, there seemed no reason *prima facie* why Tammany should make him this fine offer. Ivins said yes, it was true that he could not be elected, "but your running will raise hell." George replied that this was precisely what he wished it to do; and with that the conversation ended.

It is not quite true that the opposition to George was as largely engineered by "the forces of organized monopoly and greed" as his friends thought it was. There was that, of course; but

he had against him also the considerable body of moderate and disinterested opinion which in America has always been apprehensive of what John Adams, Madison, Randolph, Gerry, Hamilton, foresaw as the "excesses," the "dangers," the "turbulence," of unchecked and unmodified mass-rule. Any candidate of a labour-unionist party would have encountered the same opposition. He also had the active ill-will of the Democratic organization in the city and county; and in a political way, he was by no means in the good graces of the local Roman hierarchy, for reasons which will appear later.

Nevertheless he made a good showing; he came near election, so near that one might reasonably suspect that he was counted out, as Ivins had warned him he would be. If indeed hell-raising were his intention, however, one must say that he succeeded admirably. Tammany was facing one of New York's recurrent spasms of "reform" which, if successful, meant that it would have to live on its fat for a couple of years or so. Hence Tammany wanted most of all to have things go on quietly, but George's campaign blew up those hopes with its broadsides against municipal corruption and graft. The "reform" candidate was elected—he was,

by an odd coincidence, George's former employer, Abram S. Hewitt, a man of rather less than moderate ability, but a great deal of factitious dignity, one whom ribald persons nowadays would style as a stuffed shirt, and with whose candidacy Tammany would no doubt have had fairly easy rolling if it had not been for George.

The local Roman hierarchy also very much wanted things to go on quietly. The assumption that in this it was merely making itself the pliant tool of Tammany seems largely gratuitous. The Church had troubles of its own, precisely as it had had in Ireland, which were directly due to George. Some of its priests had gone in for George's economic system and had caught the infection of publicity from him; they were having too much to say about it. One priest in particular, Rev. Edward McGlynn, prominent in the diocese, rector of a large city parish, had for some time been hand-in-glove with George, and was now haranguing the multitude in favour of his election. The Church in New York felt the same displeasure at all this as the European authorities had felt in 1881 at similar activities on the part of the Irish bishop of Meath and some of his clergy. In both cases the

Church was in a hard position; it had to choose between ruffling great numbers of the faithful, and stretching discipline to the point of apparently countenancing a rather flagrant irregularity. In short, while neither the Church nor Tammany were in any actual fear of George, or anticipated any irreparable damage from his doings, they both alike regarded him as a most exasperating nuisance; which indeed, from their point of view, he was.

From the moment he accepted nomination to the mayoralty, George's prestige everywhere declined; nor does it appear that his defeat at all accelerated that decline. It was the nomination, not the election, which marked the high point of his career. At any time up to that point he could have recovered himself; the nomination was his last chance, the last red light of warning on the road which led to oblivion. By getting out of the arena of controversy, and resolutely staying out; by turning his back at once and forever on journalism, agitation, spell-binding, special pleading; by dissociating himself from those who were, as Spencer said, insuring the future ill-being of men while eagerly pursuing their present well-being; by firmly renouncing all thought of political action; by

abandoning himself implicitly to the intimations of his philosophical instinct—by this he could, at any time up to the point of the nomination, have maintained himself in the historical position which rightfully was his to occupy.

V

With the passage of the crucial opportunity, the momentum of George's previous activities, like that of Macbeth's sins, marshalled him the way that he was going. He had eleven years to live, and inasmuch as his death, strictly speaking, came by accident, he might have had more; perhaps with care he might have had twice as many. From 1886 on, however, one might say his occupations and preoccupations were exclusively with politics and polemics. He sketched out his *Science of Political Economy* during this period, worked on it at intervals, but it always had to give way to the unceasing demands of politics and polemics, and was left incomplete.

In 1887, the year after his defeat for the mayoralty, he established his weekly paper, the *Standard*, devoted wholly to polemics and propaganda. He also led in organizing a third propagandist body essentially like the two which

had earlier fallen by the wayside and perished of inanition. This was called the Anti-Poverty Society. It had a longer and more vigorous life than its predecessors, flourishing for a year, then splitting on a matter of national politics, and going under. Its prosperity was largely adventitious. Dr. McGlynn, its president, had been excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church as the culmination of a *cause célèbre* which stirred up an immense amount of interest throughout the country, and such of this interest as was favourable, as well as a good deal of it that was merely curious, redounded to the benefit of the Anti-Poverty Society. Dr. McGlynn had a large personal following among his former parishioners as well, and with these as a sort of nucleus, he was able to run the local membership far up into the thousands.

In the same year George again ran for office as a labour-candidate, this time for a state office—secretary of state. Again he was reluctant, for prudential reasons. He thought that having been so lately unsuccessful in the city, the party would come off poorly in the state; but once more he consulted the wrong kind of friends, and once more he yielded to their bad advice. He made a brisk campaign, with Dr. McGlynn

and other able speakers stumping the state for him, but his vote was inconsiderable; in New York City he polled but little more than half as many votes as he had got in the mayoralty election the year before.

All that the campaign did for him was to invigorate old enmities and create new ones; to confirm old misunderstandings and set up new ones; to chill off old friendships, and set no new ones afloat; to blow the United Labour movement to pieces, and leave himself politically in the air. Even his staunch old friend and supporter, Patrick Ford, editor of the *Irish World*, broke with him and took the side of the Roman hierarchy in condemning the new Labour Party. George fell foul once more, as he had done in England, of the socialists who had tried to capitalize on the labour movement. Tammany gleefully put the harpoon in him on every possible occasion. His acquiescence in the shocking miscarriage of justice which hanged the Chicago anarchists, Spies, Parsons, Engel and Fischer, accused of complicity in the murder of certain policemen in 1885, alienated great numbers of people; and neither his attitude towards anarchism nor his attitude towards socialism conciliated a single one of those

who regarded his own social doctrine as substantially on the same footing with either the one or the other.

Ten years later, in 1897, he entered another campaign at the head of an improvised new party, as an independent candidate for the mayoralty of New York; the party-title was the "Jeffersonian Party." The decade 1887-97 was one of the most extraordinary periods in all the history of America's fantastic civilization; even the period 1929-39 can do but little more than match its bizarre eccentricities. No one can describe that period; when the philosophical historian engages himself with it fifty years hence, he will think—and with reason—that he has come upon a nation of Bedlamites. Every imbecile socio-politico-economic nostrum that inspired idiocy could devise was trotted out and put on dress-parade for the immediate salvation of mankind. Free silver; the initiative, referendum and recall; farmer-labourism, votes-for-women, popular election of senators, the Wisconsin Idea, populism, prohibition, the Square Deal, direct primaries, Coxey and his army, Carry Nation and her hatchet, Coin Harvey and his primer—the list is without end.

This incredible irruption of frantic fatuity

had serious permanent effects upon the status of George and his doctrines. When it had spent itself and subsided, he was left as merely one more nostrum-pedlar among the many. His "Jeffersonian" campaign for the mayoralty marked him as merely one more visionary job-seeker, one with the Bryans and La Follettes of the century's turn. The tragic circumstances of George's death four days before the election gave rise everywhere to a most impressive demonstration of popular respect and sympathy, but as only for another good man gone wrong with the best of motives and the purest of intentions; motives and intentions, indeed, which had never been questioned—in this respect the popular estimate of George has always been, and still is, singularly correct. Circumstances being what they were, however, it was impossible to expect that even those—especially those—whom a disinterested examination of his philosophy would most have profited, should pick him out and disengage him from the welter of politico-economic insanity which raged around him.

Another damaging effect of circumstances was that a good deal of society's "lunatic fringe" which the period had released and made articu-

late, fastened on George's doctrine and perverted it with various adulterations. They associated it with other matters which interested them—matters ranging all the way from proportional representation to dietetics and promiscuous love-making—and viewed this association as natural and logical. Such as these had no power of discrimination, no power of establishing in their own minds the intrinsic relative importance of things; to them one nostrum was as weighty as another, if it but struck their disordered fancy to adopt it. After George's death, an increasing number of these pervaded what was known as the "single-tax movement," and did their full share to discredit it in the eyes of those who were uninformed about George's actual proposals, as well as those who had doubts of them on other grounds. An idea, like an individual, is largely judged by the company it keeps; and it was no recommendation of George's philosophy to hear it advocated by a professing single-taxer who was also a Bahaite, an interpreter of dreams and visions, a free-silverite, and who had theories concerning a nut-diet and the mystical number seven.

On a little higher plane were some who sophisticated George's fiscal proposals by dilution,

some also by whittling down his policy of "Thorough." They became double-taxers in theory, or triple-taxers; they entertained various theoretical notions of compensation to landlords; some saw no inconsistency in swallowing a mild dose of protectionism. Very few would stand up to the doctrine of "Thorough"—the doctrine calling for the abolition of all taxes, and the substitution of a straight uncompensated confiscation of economic rent at full market-valuation and at one hundred cents in the dollar. But the final bad effect of a decade of utter intellectual dishevelment was to put the ethical side of George's philosophy quite completely aside and out of sight. Thenceforth, rather than as the proponent of human freedom, contemplating men as "endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights," he appeared only as the proponent of a new economic system. He who regarded his fiscal scheme as no more than a means to an ethical end—an indispensable means, indeed, but only a means nevertheless—thenceforth appeared as the proponent of his fiscal scheme as an end-in-itself; and this is the best that is made of him today, save by a very few.