

CHAPTER 1

The Life of Henry George Before Progress and Poverty

Henry George was a little man (not quite five feet six inches tall) who strode across the stage of world affairs like a giant. A high school dropout, he educated himself and became a powerful thinker, writer, public speaker and organizer. World-famous figures—professors, philosophers, popes, statesmen, preachers, businessmen and writers—listened to him and grappled with his ideas whether they agreed with him or not. Common people flocked to his cause by the millions. He organized triumphant speaking tours in the British Isles, in Canada and in Australia as well as in his native land. He was also an able organizer, as seen by the great reform movement he sparked and led.

Childhood in Philadelphia

Henry George was born in Philadelphia on September 2, 1839. His father, Richard George, was a clerk in the Philadelphia Custom House. He left his position to become a partner in a business that published and sold books for the Protestant Episcopal Church and related Bible and prayer book societies. One of the associates in the business was George S. Appleton, who afterward became one of the owners of a large publishing house which published Henry George's most famous work, *Progress and Poverty*. Richard George's publishing venture failed in the end, and he returned to the Custom House as a clerk.

Henry George's mother was Catherine Pratt Vallance. She received a good boarding school education, and she and her sister were operating a small private school when she left to marry Richard George. They had

six daughters and four sons. Henry was their second child and the oldest boy.

By the time Henry George entered high school, he was acutely aware of the difficulty his parents had in raising a large family on wages of \$800 a year. Besides, the lad grew impatient with formal education. He was known for quickness of thought, originality and general information. Years later Henry George said that at high school he was "for the most part idle and wasted time." He felt that he should be supporting himself instead of being a financial burden on his parents. After less than five months in high school, Henry received his father's permission to leave school and go to work. He was then not quite 14 years old, and he never received any formal education after that. But his fondness for reading, his keen mind and his sharply observant eyes enabled him to educate himself with remarkable results.

In a lecture delivered at the University of California in 1877, George showed the results of this education in a story of how he reasoned why an iron ship floated:

When I was a boy I went down to the wharf with another boy to see the first iron steamship which had ever crossed the ocean to our port. Now, hearing of an iron steamship seemed to us then a good deal like hearing of a leaden kite or a wooden cooking stove. But, we had not been long aboard of her, before my companion said in a tone of contemptuous disgust: "Pooh! I see how it is. She's all lined with wood; that's the reason she floats." I could not controvert him for the moment, but I was not satisfied, and sitting down on the wharf when he left me, I set to work trying mental experiments. If it was the wood inside of her that made her float, then the more wood the higher she would float; and mentally I loaded her up with wood. But, as I was familiar with the process of making boats out of blocks of wood, I at once saw that, instead of floating higher, she would sink deeper. Then I mentally took all the wood out of her, as we dug out our wooden boats, and saw that thus lightened she would float higher still. Then, in imagination, I jammed a hole in her, and saw that the water would run in and she would sink, as did our wooden boats when ballasted with leaden keels. And thus I saw, as clearly as though I could have actually made these experiments with the steamer, that it was not the wooden lining that made her float, but her hollowness, or as I would now phrase it, her displacement of water.¹

1. Henry George, Jr., *The Life of Henry George* (New York: Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1960), p. 13. [Originally published in 1900.]

Young Henry's first job was wrapping packages and running errands for a china and glass shop at two dollars a week. Later he was a clerk in the office of a marine adjuster. This restless youth went to sea and had sailed to Australia and India by the time he was 17.

The Youth at Sea

In 1855 Henry signed up as foremast boy for six dollars a month on the merchant sailing ship *Hindoo*, bound for Australia and India on a voyage that lasted fourteen months. The crew went on strike in Melbourne; they were rebelling against the harsh conditions that were so typical on ships, and they had caught the "gold fever," hoping to strike gold as prospectors. The crew was sentenced to a month's hard labor and a new crew was signed on to complete the voyage.

Though the captain of the *Hindoo* was Henry's benefactor and a friend of the George family, Henry's sympathies were with the striking sailors. Although he did not go on strike himself, years later he defended effectively the rights of seamen. In 1873 the ship *Sunrise* sailed from New York to San Francisco. The captain was brutal enough toward the men that three of them, who had been kidnapped on to the ship in the first place, jumped overboard and were drowned. Word of these conditions got around San Francisco, but no United States marshal or other officials made a move. Henry George, then co-owner of the San Francisco *Daily Evening Post*, demanded prosecution, and he swore out a complaint in a federal court. The captain fled but was caught and brought to trial. The newspaper had offered a reward for his capture and it engaged a lawyer to fight the case. The captain was convicted, fined \$5,000 and sentenced to prison for 14 months. George and the *Post* later took up other cases of maritime brutality and became known as champions of sailors' rights. George thundered against the force of law which kept the seamen bound according to their articles for long voyages. If all special statutes were to lapse, seamen would be "free to claim their wages and leave the ship whenever the anchor was down." This action would induce ship owners to provide decent food and conditions aboard ship, and it would give sailors equal footing with other workers in a free society to keep or change their jobs.

When Henry returned to Philadelphia he became a typesetter. At this time he encountered his first puzzling question in political economy.

An old printer had commented to him one day that wages are always low in old countries and high in new ones. The boy compared wages in the United States with those in Europe, and California's with those of the east coast. The old printer's words seemed true enough, but neither of them could explain why. The paradox stuck in Henry's mind and he continued to grope for an answer.

In the heated discussions of the slavery issue just prior to the Civil War, Henry took a strong anti-slavery stand. In this he opposed his parents, who supported peace, property rights and the Democratic Party.

The restless youth complained of low wages and intermittent employment in the printing trade. In 1857 he signed on as a seaman on a schooner carrying coal from Philadelphia to Boston. Times were even worse when he reached home again. He decided at age eighteen to leave for the west coast. The steamer *Schubrik* was heading for California as a light-house tender, and Henry signed on as a ship's steward, or storekeeper, at forty dollars a month. He started on the voyage on, December 22, 1857, and he was not to return to his family in Philadelphia until eleven years later.

The chief incident of the voyage provided a bizarre tale written up by George and published in a Philadelphia weekly paper in 1866 and reprinted in a San Francisco journal. When the *Shubrick* left Rio de Janeiro, yellow fever broke out. All those who were stricken recovered except the second assistant engineer. As the young man knew he was dying, he pleaded to be buried ashore rather than at sea. The ship steamed up the La Plata River to Montevideo, and the captain asked permission to bury the corpse. Permission was denied, because quarantine regulations required that the ship go back some miles and commit the body to the sea.

The coffin, properly weighted, was slid overboard and it sank out of sight. As the *Shubrick* headed up the river again, the coffin rose to the surface. A boat was lowered, and some men tried to sink the box by fastening a small anchor and some heavy chain to it. The coffin seemed to elude their efforts in the fresh breeze and the choppy sea. After repeated efforts they succeeded in sinking the casket again. As George described the scene:

After waiting some time, to make sure that it could not float again, we

started once more up the river, and this time awe was mingled with our grief. Most men who follow the sea have a touch of superstition. There is something in the vastness with which Nature presents herself upon the great waters which influences in this direction even minds otherwise sceptical. And as we steamed up the river, it was more than hinted among many of us that the strong desire of the dying man had something to do with the difficulty of sinking his body.²

The *Shubrick* again steamed up the La Plata past many naval and merchant vessels. The officer who boarded the ship directed that she go to the farther side of the harbor to lie in quarantine seven days before being allowed to take on coal. As the sun was sinking in the west, the startled crew saw an object floating in the distance and drifting toward them. It was the coffin they had sunk hours earlier. As if piloted by a live human being, the coffin turned and tacked past all the ships in the harbor, heading for the *Shubrick*. It touched the side of the vessel, halted a moment as if claiming recognition, and then slowly drifted past toward shore. The corpse was claiming burial on land! The crew buried their comrade on land, secretly, in the twilight; the dying wish was gratified.

The *Shubrick* reached San Francisco on May 27, 1858. Henry George, age nineteen, had arrived at his destination. Apparently then he jumped ship, losing his accumulated wages but buoyed with hope for the future.

The Young Man in California

Shortly thereafter Henry George worked his way as a seaman to British Columbia. The lure was the recent discovery of gold in the Frazer River region. He worked in a cousin's store in Victoria while waiting for the spring floods to subside. By the time he was able to go up river, discouraging reports about the prospects of finding gold sent him back to San Francisco "dead broke." He had an assortment of jobs as a typesetter, a weigher in a rice mill, a prospector for gold in California and a farm laborer. He looked forward eagerly to September 2, 1860, when he would be twenty-one years old and would qualify as a journeyman typesetter at full pay—if he could find a job.

². *Ibid.*, p. 65.

As soon as he came of age, George joined the typographical union. He began to work irregularly as a substitute typesetter at a journeyman's wages. Then he joined the *California Home Journal* as foreman of the printshop. When the paper was sold, he was out of work again. He and five other printers bought the San Francisco *Daily Evening Journal*. The poverty of this enterprise was described later by George: "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 economise, but finally I ran in debt thirty dollars for my board bill." The partnership was dissolved and George was again unemployed and penniless.

Shortly after his twenty-first birthday, George met Annie Fox at her seventeenth birthday celebration. She was an orphan, born in Australia but then living in California. Her uncle, Matthew McCloskey, was virtually her guardian after her grandmother died. As the young man courted the niece, her uncle wrote to Philadelphia to find out more about the George family; finding the lineage satisfactory, he permitted the courtship to continue. But Henry's loss of employment began to show in the growing shabbiness of his clothing. McCloskey finally told George that until he could show more evidence of prosperity, he should make his visits to Annie Fox less frequent. The young man replied with some anger, and the two hot-tempered men were about to come to blows when Annie rushed between them.

The next morning, when Henry came to see her, Annie announced that she would no longer live with her relatives in San Francisco; she would accept a teaching position in Los Angeles. Henry grieved at the thought of not seeing her again. He drew from his pocket a single coin and said, "Annie, that is all the money I have in the world. Will you marry me?" She answered, "If you are willing to undertake the responsibilities of marriage, I will marry you." They eloped that night, he in borrowed clothes that looked better than his own, and with borrowed money. She left home with one heavy package. It turned out to contain the *Household Book of Poetry* and all the other volumes that Henry had given her. He was twenty-two and Annie eighteen when they were married on December 3, 1861.

There was no wedding trip for them. The following morning Henry arose at five to go out and look for work. He was able to find a job as a substitute typesetter.

There followed years of precarious employment and poverty. On November 3, 1862 their first child, Henry George, Jr., was born; he was to be the first biographer of his father, and he was to serve as a representative in the United States Congress from New York. Their second child, Richard Fox George, was born on January 27, 1865; he was to become a noted sculptor, immortalizing his father in bronze. Between the births of their first two children, the Georges often were hungry. Henry would leave the house without breakfast, saying he would eat down town; but Annie knew he had no money. She would not complain, nor would she run up bills that she knew they could not pay. During her second pregnancy she parted with her little pieces of jewelry and trinkets until only her wedding ring (which had been her grandmother's) remained. Finally she told the milkman that she could no longer afford to take milk, but he offered to continue to supply it for printed cards, which she accepted. When Richard was born the doctor called out, "Don't stop to wash the child; he is starving. Feed him." Henry George, desperate for some money, described sixteen years later what happened that day:

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 I wanted \$5. He asked what I wanted it for. I 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.³

George later used this incident as proof that environment has more to do with human actions, and especially with so-called criminal actions, than we generally concede. Acute poverty, he said, may drive sound-minded moral men to commit evil deeds.

Things then began to improve somewhat. George found some work as a substitute typesetter, although it was scant and irregular. His wife paid part of the rent for their home by sewing for their landlady. The man of twenty-five was ready to begin his career as a writer.

George Becomes a Writer

Henry George began his career as a writer early in 1865, when he began practicing writing in order to improve his style. His first

3. *Ibid.*, p.149.

published piece was a long letter to the editor of a labor journal urging working men to think about political and social questions; they should discover if it is possible to "check the tendency of society to resolve itself into classes who have too much or too little."

His first published article was a fanciful sketch titled, "A Plea for the Supernatural," published in California and republished in Boston.

George was a substitute typesetter at the newspaper *Alta California* when the Civil War ended and Lincoln was assassinated. Anger ran high in San Francisco, and mobs destroyed several newspapers which had fostered secession. George, who had voted for Lincoln in 1860, led an assault against one of the "copperhead" newspapers, but when he got there others were already hurling type, furniture and machinery into the street, and little remained for him and his gang to do. The next day he wrote an impassioned eulogy of Lincoln called "Sic Semper Tyrannis!"; it was published by the newspaper he worked for. The beginning and ending paragraphs are worth quoting to show the passion and power of this fledgling writer:

A man rushed to the front of the President's box, waving a long dagger in his right hand, exclaiming, "*Sic semper tyrannis!*"

"Alta" despatches, April 15.

What a scene these few words bring—vivid as the lightning flash that bore them! The glitter and glare, curving circle and crowded pit, flash of jewels and glinting of silks—and the blanched sea of up-turned faces, the fixed and staring eyes, the awful hush—silence of death! . . .

Sic semper tyrannis! Blazoned on the shield of a noble State by the giants of the young republic, their degenerate sons shall learn its meaning! The murderer's shout as Lincoln fell, it will be taken up by a million voices. *Thus shall* perish all who wickedly raise their hands to shed the blood of the defenders of the oppressed, and who strive, by wickedness and cruelty, to preserve and perpetuate wrong. Their names shall become a hissing and a reproach among men as long as the past shall be remembered; and the great sin in whose support they spared no crime is numbered henceforth with the things that were. *Sic semper tyrannis!* Amen.⁴

A few days later the editor of the *Alta California* assigned George as

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 162-164.

a special reporter to describe the Lincoln mourning decorations throughout the city; this was the first writing for which he received payment. The printer had become a writer.

A little later George and his family moved to Sacramento, where he set type on a contract for official state government printing. After a year he returned to San Francisco, where a new daily paper, the *Times*, gave him a position in the composing room. Three of his editorial articles were accepted and published soon after the paper was founded on November 5, 1866. He became a reporter, an editorial writer, and by June, 1867 was managing editor. This was the year the Georges' third child, Jennie Teresa, was born; she lived until the year of her father's death, 1897, leaving a husband and a baby boy of seven months.

In August, 1868 George left the *Times* and became managing editor of the San Francisco *Chronicle*. In October he published his most important article up to that time: "What the Railroad Will Bring Us." It appeared in *The Overland Monthly*, a journal edited by Bret Harte, with Mark Twain among its contributors. The first transcontinental railroad was nearing completion; in the face of widespread enthusiasm about this coming event, George raised doubts about the benefits it would bring. He had not yet hit upon the great theme he developed in *Progress and Poverty*. But in this article he did show his vast humanitarian concern about the poor, and he anticipated and deplored the widening gap between the rich and the poor that the railroad would bring.

The railroad will benefit only some people, said George. Those who have will become wealthier; those who have not will find it more difficult to make a living. Competition will reduce wages, and land prices will rise. The locomotive kills small towns and small businesses while it builds up great cities and great corporations.

Nor is it worth while to shut our eyes to the effects of this concentration of wealth. One millionaire involves the existence of just so many proletarians. It is the great tree and the saplings over again. We need not look far from the palace to find the hovel. When people can charter special steamboats to take them to watering places, pay four thousand dollars for the summer rental of a cottage, build marble stables for their horses, and give dinner parties which cost by the thousand dollars a head, we may know that there are poor girls on the streets pondering between starvation and dishonor. When liveries appear, look out for bare-footed children. A few liveries are now to be seen on

our streets; we think their appearance coincides in date with the establishment of the almshouse. . . .

In the growth of large corporations and other special interests is an element of great danger. Of these great corporations and interests we shall have many. Look, for instance, at the Central Pacific Railroad Company, 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!⁵

During 1868-69 Henry George began his life-long personal struggle against the powerful and entrenched interests. The Associated Press and the Western Union Telegraph Company established a monopoly press service, excluding certain newspapers from access to their wire service. The San Francisco *Herald* engaged George to go to New York to try to get the paper admitted to the Associated Press; if that was refused, he was to establish his own news service for the paper. This assignment enabled George and his family to visit his Philadelphia relatives in 1868.

The Board of Directors of the Associated Press refused service to the *Herald*. George set up his own press bureau and telegraphed his dispatches through Western Union, which controlled the only route to San Francisco. George worked out a cooperative arrangement with the New York *Herald* news service, and the service he supplied his west coast paper was better than that of the Associated Press. Western Union then raised the San Francisco *Herald's* charges and lowered those of the Associated Press. This ended the rival news service and reestablished the monopoly, and it put the San Francisco *Herald* out of business.

While George was in the East, he wrote an article for Horace Greeley's *New York Tribune* opposing unrestricted Chinese immigration. This showed another side of George's character, racial intolerance, and it led to his exchange of letters with John Stuart Mill, the great English economist. George condemned the Chinese in the United States as "heathens, treacherous, sensual, cowardly and cruel. . . . Infanticide is common among them; so is abduction and assassination." West coast newspapers and unions hailed George's article and reprinted it with enthusiasm.

5. *The Overland Monthly*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (October, 1868), 303-304, 306.

George sent a copy of his *Tribune* article to Mill. The latter wrote a long letter in reply. He agreed with George that a large immigration must lower wage rates. But he wondered to what extent those who take possession of an area have the right to exclude the rest of mankind from moving in. Mill also thought that the character and habits of the Chinese in the United States could be improved. Aside from contract labor which he regarded as a form of slavery, Mill favored Chinese immigration.

George received much favorable publicity when he published Mill's letter in the Oakland *Daily Transcript*, of which he was then the editor.

While George was opposed to the most enlightened views of his time on the Chinese question, he was ahead of his time on women's rights. He published an editorial in 1872 saying that women have the capacity to fill the very highest positions in educational institutions, and they should get the same pay as men for performing the same duties equally well. He favored votes for women. His strong belief in feminism was indicated in behavior as well as in word. One day as he went home he saw his wife approaching from another direction. Catching sight of him she hurried up and explained, "I was delayed shopping. I'm sorry—I always like to be home waiting for you." "Annie," he responded almost severely, "don't you ever talk that way again. Just why must you get home at a certain time? I don't possess you! Never put me in the position, even in your thought, of being your master, to whom you need give an accounting of your actions! I'm free to come and go as I see fit—and so must you be!"⁶

Henry George, scholar, writer, social and political activist, and defender of the common man and woman, was now prepared to enter upon the greatest creative phase of his career. He began to develop the ideas that were to culminate in his masterpiece nine years later.

The Birth of Progress and Poverty

Henry George ascribed to a trifling incident the germination of his great idea. He was riding a horse in the open country in 1870, a few months after the completion of the transcontinental railroad.

6. Anna George de Mille, *Henry George, Citizen of the World* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1950), p. 69.

Absorbed in my own thoughts, I had driven the horse into the hills until he panted. Stopping for breath, I asked a passing teamster, for want of something better to say, what land was worth there. He pointed to some cows grazing off so far 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." Like a flash it came upon 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. I turned back, amidst quiet thought, to the perception that then came to me and has been with me ever since.⁷

The following year George wrote his first analysis of the land question. His pamphlet, equivalent to about 150 ordinary book pages, he titled *Our Land and Land Policy, National and State*. This was to be expanded eight years later in his first and most famous book. As *Progress and Poverty* will be presented in the next two chapters, nothing more needs to be said at this point about his pamphlet, except that he had 1000 copies printed for \$75; he sold 21 copies at 25 cents each, and the rest he gave away.

At the end of 1871, when Henry George was unemployed, he and two others became founding partners of the San Francisco *Daily Evening Post*, of which he was to become the editor. It was a crusading newspaper, supporting the taxation of land values to the exclusion of all other taxes. George was elected a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in 1872, and he and the paper supported Horace Greeley for president. Because George and his associates borrowed money to buy one of the best printing presses available, and could not meet the payments, the paper passed to other hands in 1875.

George had helped elect the Democratic governor of California. He asked that official "to give me a place where there was little to do and something to get, so that I might devote myself to some important writing." In January, 1876 he was given the office of State Inspector of Gas-Meters, which gave him the income and leisure to write his first and greatest book.

George was already well known on the west coast as an editor and a writer when he gave his first formal speech in 1876. It was in support of

7. Henry George, Jr., *The Life of Henry George*, p. 210.

Samuel J. Tilden, Democratic candidate for president, in opposition to Rutherford B. Hayes. He was asked to campaign throughout the state, and he became the leading Democratic orator in the presidential campaign. After the election George wrote to his mother: "I propose to read and study, to write some things which will extend 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."

On March 9, 1877 George gave, by invitation, a lecture to the students and faculty of the University of California at Berkeley; it was published in *The Popular Science Monthly* in March, 1880. There was talk of establishing a chair of political economy, and Henry George, this dropout from the first year of high school, was expected to fill it. His speech killed the chances of his appointment, for he was too honest and forthright to curb and bend his thoughts to the requirements of the job. Here are some of his thoughts that were well received by the students but disliked by the authorities of the University:

It seems to me that the reasons why political economy is so little regarded are referable partly to the nature of the science itself and partly to the manner in which it has been cultivated.

In the first place, the very importance of the subjects with which political economy deals raises obstacles in its way. The discoveries of other sciences may challenge pernicious ideas, but the conclusions of political economy involve pecuniary interests and thus thrill directly the sensitive pocket-nerve. . . .

And springing, as it seems to me, from the same fundamental cause, there has arisen an idea of political economy which has arrayed against it the feelings and prejudices of those who have most to gain by its cultivation. The name of political economy has been constantly invoked against every effort of the working classes to increase their wages or decrease their hours of labor. The impious doctrine always preached by oppressors to oppressed—the blasphemous dogma that the Creator has condemned one portion of his creatures to lives of toil and want, while he has intended another portion to enjoy "all the fruits of the earth and the fullness thereof"—has been preached to the working classes in the name of political economy, just as the "cursed-be-Ham" clergymen used to preach the divine sanction of slavery in the name of Christianity. In so far as the real turning [*burning?*] questions of the day are concerned, political economy seems to be considered by most of its professors as a scientific justification of all that is, and by the convenient formula of supply and demand they seem to mean some

method which Providence has of fixing the rate of wages so that it can never by any action of the employed be increased. Nor is it merely ignorant pretenders who thus degrade the name and terms of political economy. This character has been so firmly stamped upon the science itself as currently held and taught that not even men like John Stuart Mill have been able to emancipate themselves. Even the intellectually courageous have shrunk from laying stress upon principles which might threaten great vested interests; while others, less scrupulous, have exercised their ingenuity in eliminating from the science everything which could offend those interests. Take the best and most extensively circulated text-books. While they insist upon freedom for capital, while they justify on the ground of utility the selfish greed that seeks to pile fortune on fortune, and the niggard spirit that steels the heart to the wail of distress, what sign of substantial promise do they hold out to the working man save that he should refrain from rearing children? . . .

For the study of political economy you need no special knowledge, no extensive library, no costly laboratory. You do not even need text-books nor teachers, if you will but think for yourselves. . . . Education is not the learning of facts; it is the development and training of mental powers. All this array of professors, all this paraphernalia of learning, cannot educate a man. They can but help him to educate himself. Here you may obtain the tools; but they will be useful only to him who can use them. A monkey with a microscope, a mule packing a library, are fit emblems of the men—and, unfortunately, they are plenty—who pass through the whole educational machinery, and come out but learned fools, crammed with knowledge which they cannot use—all the more pitiable, all the more contemptible, all the more in the way of real progress, because they pass, with themselves and others, as educated men. . . .

You are of the favored few, for the fact that you are here, students in a university of this character, bespeaks for you the happy accidents that fall only to the lot of the few, and you cannot yet realize, as you may by-and-by realize, how the hard struggle which is the lot of so many may cramp and bind and distort—how it may dull the noblest faculties and chill the warmest impulses, and grind out of men the joy and poetry of life; how it may turn into the lepers of society those who should be its adornment, and transmute into vermin to prey upon it and into wild beasts to fly at its throat, the brain and muscle that should go to its enrichment! These things may never yet have forced themselves on your attention; but still, if you will think of it, you cannot fail to see enough want and wretchedness, even in our own country today, to move you to sadness and pity, to nerve you to high resolve; to arouse in you the sympathy that dares, and the indignation that burns to overthrow a wrong.

And seeing these things, would you fain do something to relieve distress, to eradicate ignorance, to extirpate vice? You must turn to political economy to know their causes, that you may lay the axe to the root of the evil tree. Else all your efforts will be in vain. Philanthropy, unguided by an intelligent apprehension of causes, may palliate or it may intensify, but it cannot cure. If charity could eradicate want, if preaching could make men moral, if printing books and building schools could destroy ignorance, none of these things would be known today.⁸

George noted in his diary that on September 18, 1877 he began to write *Progress and Poverty*. The whole country was suffering an industrial depression at the time. Great railroad strikes were widespread, and troops and police were called out to run the trains. There were rioting, shooting, killing and the destroying of property in the great industrial conflicts that erupted. The unrest spread to California, and Henry George wrote with passion and outrage against poverty, hunger and the maldistribution of wealth and income in a country as rich as the United States.

On October 2, 1877 the Georges' fourth and last child was born. She was Anna Angela, the second child to write the father's biography. Her daughter, Agnes de Mille, became the famous dancer and choreographer.

By the end of 1877 hard times again appeared for the George family. Income had shrunk to almost nothing, because there were few uninspected gas meters left, and payment was on a piece-rate basis. George's debts amounted to \$450, and he was able to eke out a living by delivering lectures.

In mid-March of 1879 Henry George completed *Progress and Poverty*. He was thirty-nine years old, and he had spent a year and a half writing his treatise. When he finished the last page late at night, he went down on his knees and wept with relief.

8. Henry George, *The Study of Political Economy* (New York: The Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, no date), pp. 4-7, 13-15.