

# **THE PROPHET OF SAN FRANCISCO**

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The Prophet of San Francisco by Louis F. Post

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**LOUIS F. POST**

**THE PROPHET OF  
SAN FRANCISCO**



*The Prophet of  
San Francisco*

By  
*Louis F. Post*



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of November 1902.







## THE PROPHET OF SAN FRANCISCO

**M**ANY an epithet flung in derision clings with honor, and that which the Duke of Argyle applied to Henry George is not an exception. Among those whose minds have grasped the economic principles to which this distinguished American appealed, and whose hearts have throbbled with the high moral purpose of his prophetic crusade, no name for him is cherished with more affection than the learned Duke's ungracious epithet—"The Prophet of San Francisco."

Like the prophets of Israel, Henry George warned a corrupted civilization that it must mend its ways or perish. Like them he proclaimed anew the immutable decree that mankind must conform to the laws of righteousness or suffer the natural consequences of unrighteousness. Listen to his warning cry:

"The fiat has gone forth! With steam and electricity, and the new powers born of progress, forces have entered the world that will either compel us to a higher plane or overwhelm us, as nation after nation, as

civilization after civilization, have been overwhelmed before. It is the delusion which precedes destruction that sees in the popular unrest with which the civilized world is feverishly pulsing only the passing effects of ephemeral causes. Between democratic ideas and the aristocratic adjustments of society there is an irreconcilable conflict. Here in the United States, as there in Europe, it may be seen arising. We cannot go on permitting men to vote and forcing them to tramp. We cannot go on educating boys and girls in our public schools and then refusing them the right to earn an honest living. We cannot go on prating of the inalienable rights of man and then denying the inalienable right to the bounty of the Creator. Even now, in old bottles the new wine begins to ferment, and elemental forces gather for the strife!"\*

That was the burden of his prophecy on the darker side. It was upon the brighter side, however, that he laid his emphasis. The splendid climax of all his preaching was the inspiring lesson that conformity to the laws of righteousness also has natural consequences, and that these are like gifts from the gods. With the warning prelude just quoted, the thought of the prophet begins to mount as a brighter prospect comes within his vision. "But!" he joyously exclaims—and then, while a shadow of doubt passes before the hopeful picture, he lingers a moment upon a ques-

\* Library edition of the Works of Henry George. "Progress and Poverty," p. 542.

tioning "if"—"but if, while there is yet time, we turn to Justice and obey her, if we trust Liberty and follow her, the dangers that now threaten must disappear, the forces that now menace will turn to agencies of elevation. Think of the powers now wasted; of the infinite fields of knowledge yet to be explored; of the possibilities of which the wondrous inventions of this century give us but a hint. With want destroyed; with greed changed to noble passions; with the fraternity that is born of equality taking the place of the jealousy and fear that now array men against each other; with mental power loosed by conditions that give to the humblest comfort and leisure; and who shall measure the heights to which our civilization may soar? Words fail the thought! It is the Golden Age of which poets have sung and high-raised seers have told in metaphor! It is the glorious vision which has always haunted man with gleams of fitful splendor. It is what he saw whose eyes at Patmos were closed in a trance. It is the culmination of Christianity—the City of God on earth, with its walls of jasper and its gates of pearl! It is the reign of the Prince of Peace!"\*

With that prophetic utterance on his lips, Henry George came up out of San Francisco to excite the petulance of a Scottish duke, whilst awakening the civilized world to a consciousness of its most deadly communal sin. And seldom have prophets

\* Library edition of the Works of Henry George. "Progress and Poverty," p. 549.