

A Trip to Girard.

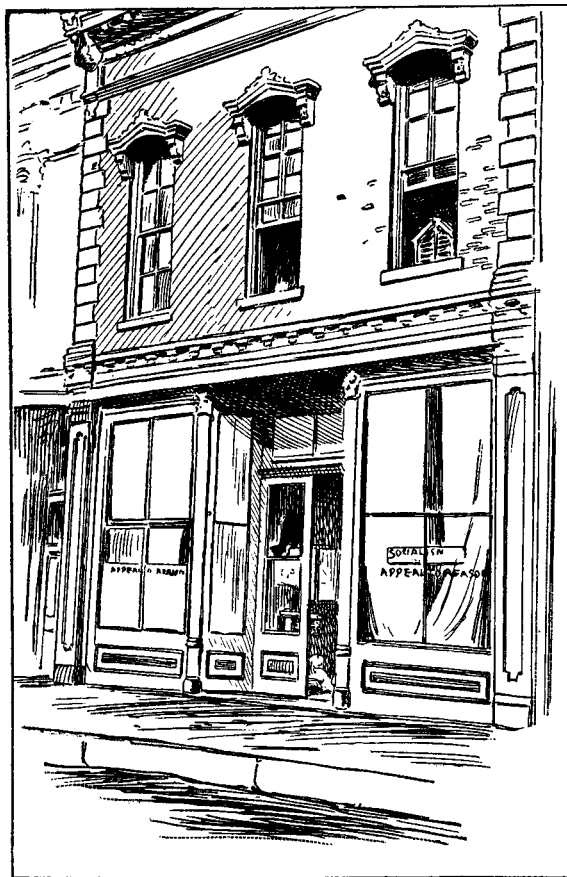
by "Wayfarer"

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I presume the Socialists of this great land of promise are as curious about Editor Wayland and his remarkable *Appeal to Reason* as I was, and so I will try to give them a squint at him in his native haunts, through my optics. When the idea of a yearbook for Social Democrats began to take shape, the Editor decided that one of the features must be a write-up of the sage of Girard. When the time came for the preparation of "copy," he posted me off double-quick for the purpose indicated.

Before I got my head again the cars had set me down in the little town of Girard, way down in the southeast portion of "Bleedin' Kansas." You may be sure I was glad to stretch my legs again after a ride across four states, but I forgot my fatigue in the feeling of romantic interest that stole over me as I gazed about in the modern Mecca of Socialism. I was on the tiptoe of expectancy, for within a few brief moments I would be clasping the hand of one of the greatest Socialist-makers this world of woe ever produced. The little town depot was on the outskirts of the town, but I soon reached the business center — four streets enclosing a public square with a court house in the center. I passed along one of these streets and soon found myself in front of a brick store building, without the wooden awning that was characteristic of most of the others. On the windows were the words, "Appeal to Reason," and as I passed inside I beheld a man seated at a typewriter just outside an inner office en-

closed with glass. Let me describe the man, for it was none other than the "One Hoss Philosopher" himself. Tall, a trifle stoop-shouldered, complexion neither light nor dark, smooth shaven with the exception of a rather close-cropped mustache, glasses, and what I cannot better describe than as a pleasant frown. About 45 years old and as vigorous as a boy.



Appeal to Reason Building (1900)

with a reconstructive period after it. I asked him about his work on the *Appeal* and he said he wrote without effort, frequently grinding out the first page in a forenoon. He gets his inspiration from Ruskin, a set of

Well, we became brother confessors at once. The paper for that week was printed and mailed and Wayland insisted that he had plenty of time to visit. He showed me over the plant, of which I will speak later. Then we sat down in his private office and talked Socialism and Social Democracy till dinner time. We talked of how it was going to come, among other things, and he said he felt that we would get public railroads and the like from the ballot, but that it seemed as if democracy's full habiliment must come through a cataclysm,

whose works are at his elbow. "The *Appeal* editorials are simply Ruskin turned into the language of the common people," said he.

But the noon whistles were now blowing, and we started for the "farm." Wayland's farm covers about a half block of land at the outskirts of Girard. It is a farm in miniature, with a pasture, several rows of fruit trees, and a fine front yard, with the inevitable row of catalpas at the street front. The house is a large and homelike one, and there is a large barn with a chicken yard and a berry patch. After dinner my host still insisted that he had plenty of time, and as he smoked his after-dinner cigar, he told me of how he came to be in the Socialist movement. I'll try to give it to you secondhand. Years ago (in 1891) he was a successful businessman and property holder of Pueblo, Col. He was looked on as a hardheaded Republican. When he built a house he avoided union labor, and his mind was centered in profit-making. Besides owning some of the choicest real estate in the city he was a member of the largest printing establishment there. He was democratic in manner and on easy terms with all with whom he came in contact.

On his way to business each day he passed a little shoe shop on a principal thoroughfare. It was kept by an old man named Bredfield, who scraped up an acquaintance with Wayland and began cautiously to proselyte him. His victim was unsuspecting and finally stopped as he passed the little shop and listened attentively when the old fellow would pick up a book and read a passage or two from it. Then they would discuss the matter under consideration and finally Wayland took the book home and read it. It was one of John Ruskin's. One evening as Wayland was going home from business the old fellow slipped another book under his arm. On his way home he looked at it. "*The Cooperative Commonwealth*, by Laurence Gronlund," he read on the cover. Then he turned to the title page and read, "An Exposition of Socialism." Wayland was aroused in a minute. He was indignant. The capitalist newspapers always spoke of Socialism as something seditious and indecent. The old man had taken a mean advantage of him, and he at first thought to pitch the book in the gutter. He took it home, however, and after supper went into his library, and, with a guilty feeling, began to read the book. The more he read the more his interest grew. He was overwhelmed,

astounded. Finally his feelings overcame him and he flung the book down, exclaiming in the excitement of a great discovery: "By God! It's politics!"

A new light had broken in on him. Saul had become Paul. Next morning he hastened to Bredfield and plied him with questions. Wasn't it politics? Couldn't it be brought about by a political movement? The old man's eyes twinkled and he nodded his head. Then Wayland learned some things he had not known before. The old man told him about the People's Party and that it even published a local paper — a paper actually printed on Wayland's presses! There was a campaign coming on and Wayland plunged in. He was a changed man. He had everything he came across reprinted, and flooded the town. On two different occasions he bought 50,000 copies each of *Ten Men of Money Island* and *Seven Financial Conspiracies* and had them mailed to every address in the state he could obtain. People thought he had lost his wits and bantered and bluffed him. They pressed him into taking all kinds of bets on the coming campaign — and when election day came the People's Party candidates made such a good showing that he won every single bet!

In the winter of 1892 Mr. Wayland and his wife were in Florida, and he had been doing some reading and thinking. He became convinced that a panic was coming on. He grew uneasy, for a panic would have caused him the loss of most of his fortune. Finally he made a flying trip to Colorado and began to sell his real estate for what he could get for it at forced sale. The people thought he was crazy. A few months later, when the panic of 1893 was upon them, they changed their estimate of his mental condition. He rode the financial storm like a duck, and many a fellow townsman, who had laughed at his warnings, went down to ruin. After he had disposed of his real estate he took editorial charge of the local paper without pay and made it so hot for propaganda that it became a power in the state. In the state populist convention he insisted on the nomination of Gov. Waite and the convention did not dare refuse it. He knew that Waite stood for more than mere money reform, and he was working for the future of the movement when it would break away from some of its confusions.

When Ruskin Colony was started, as a result of the success of *The Coming Nation*, which Wayland began at Greensville, Ind., he sent money down to a

few people who were first to arrive on the ground, and one of them who was a sort of self-constituted agent, kept writing for more, alleging that various work was under way and being ushered forward. When Wayland appeared on the scene, he found nothing had been done, but that the pioneers were quartered at a hotel at Tennessee City, living in luxury on the money he had forwarded. From the start, Mr. Wayland says, there was no social life at Ruskin. I asked him if he thought he could do better if he should try again. He said he knew of one way to make such a colony succeed, and that would be to hire people to live in it and pay them a salary for living there!

Before going to Ruskin, Wayland had read none of the books on the history of American communities. But even reading of their failures would not have deterred him, he says. He had to find out by actual experience the impossibility of all-around success in such undertakings.

I tried to get a photograph of my host for the yearbook, but he shook his head laughingly. “I have refused to give out my picture for psychological reasons,” he said. People imagined what he looked like from his writings and it was better not to destroy their imaginary picture by presenting a real one. And to show how some people regard him, I will give you this little anecdote I heard while in Girard. Mr. Wayland’s son went visiting in the state of Arkansas. He was introduced to a young man, who was instantly struck by the name. “You come from Kansas, eh?” he said, “you ain’t any relation to the Wayland that edits the *Appeal to Reason* over there, are you?”

“Yes, he’s my father.”

“You don’t say! Why my father prays to him every night!”

Wayland finished his cigar and then showed me his library — a small one, for he says he hates to keep books idle as long as he can find anybody willing to read them. He also exhibited a framed picture of his house in Ruskin, which I took the liberty of copying. On the way downtown we stopped in the post office and, helping him carry his mail over to the office, I

looked on while he opened it. It was a sight worth seeing, and I could see how his correspondents kept him on the jump tending to all their needs.

The *Appeal to Reason* occupies the entire building, of which a view is herewith shown. On the first floor are the mailing clerks, the office, then a large space filled with paper rolls for the big press — a warehouse overflow — and back of them the two presses, the job presses, the gas engine, etc. One of the big presses is a perfecting one and rips off 10,000 papers an hour. On the floor above is the typesetting department and the assistant editor’s sanctum. The composing room is presided over by an ex-Ruskinite, and the assistant editor is now Comrade F.G.R. Gordon, but when I was there it was Comrade Dodge, better known to readers of the paper as “Pilgrim,” and also a former Ruskinite, by the way.

After supper, in the evening, we started out for a stroll and talked and talked, as only two red hot Socialist enthusiasts can talk. When he was warmed up to his subject, I almost imagined it was Debs talking to me, and I am willing to go on record as saying that if Wayland went at it he could make as big a hit as a speaker as he has as an editor, and that is certainly saying a great deal. We talked about tactics, about Socialist newspapers, and whatnot, and Wayland meantime puffed away at his cigar till it glowed like a Bengal light. He’s an awful smoker, and says if he didn’t have at least four cigars a day he’d be so nervous there would be no living with him.

With genuine sadness I started to the train next day. Wayland insisted on going to the depot with me and before we left the office filled me up with pamphlets, and then the train came puffing along and the time for saying farewell had come. I thought as I gazed at his receding figure on the platform how little the townsmen about him realized his true worth to humanity or the deep, world-saving significance of his self-sacrificing activity, his consecrated labors. And I want to say in addition that J.A. Wayland is decidedly my kind of a good fellow.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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