

THE WAYLAND
I KNEW  

BY
GEORGE D. BREWER

 A Character Sketch of the "One
Hoss" Editor and Founder of
the Appeal to Reason. 



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YOU didn't know J. A. Wayland personally. Not a hundred men ever did know him. True, thousands met and conversed with him who thought they understood his habits and life. They didn't. Some people who thought they were acquainted with Comrade Wayland considered him a rough and very bad man. Thought he was hard-hearted, cruel, vindictive and vulgar. I know because I thought him so myself—once. But after ten years of almost daily association I was privileged to look beneath the surface and behold the real man. He was not brutal. Neither was he hard-hearted or cruel. The soul of the man was revealed within. It glowed like the soul of the Christ. The heart instead of being hard and cruel and vindictive was warm and forgiving. It ached—not as one heart aches—but in unison with a world's heartache. Misunderstood because he didn't, or couldn't, give outward expression to his innermost feelings. Abused, villified and murdered because the world couldn't understand him. It was not the fault of the world. It was not the fault of Wayland that he couldn't make himself understood.

Schooled in the university of hardship and poverty, he philosophically analyzed society, first by units and then as a whole. He started

in life a pessimist, later became an optimist, was betrayed, traduced and imposed upon, even by those whom he had befriended, and reverted back to pessimism. He schooled himself into the belief that every man's hand was turned against him—hence every man, individually, was his enemy. Yet in spite of this apparent paradox, Comrade Wayland loved the world, and, as it were, took society as a whole to his bosom.

IN all of the histories of great men and their achievements there is not one that in the minutest detail will resemble the life story of Julius A. Wayland (the "one hoss" editor) when it is written. He was a character unto himself. Stood alone in the world without another figure with whom he could be compared.

Born in poverty, of obscure and ordinary parents, he was destined to rise out of both the poverty and the obscurity. Financial ability was misunderstood for rascality; his ideal considered the aberration of a faulty mind and his genius thought to be the hallucination of a vicious and queer knave.

How little of the real virtues of this man the world ever knew or ever will know! True, he was peculiar, but show me the genius who is not. I think he had the most philosophical mind I ever encountered. It seemed sometimes that it was cruelly so.

I once heard him vigorously reprove Eugene V. Debs for wasting his time writing personal letters to the "down and outs," giving away his money and other such touching acts of that great soul. He said: "Debs, you're a damn fool. What is the use of wasting your valuable time on these human wrecks; hopeless victims who can never be of service to themselves or to society? Let them perish. They are only rubbish in the stream, clogging the world's progress. Every minute you waste on an individual is at the expense of the greater good you could be doing for all of society. Every day you write from twenty to fifty personal letters, in many of them enclosing money to pay a widow's rent or an old man's doctor bill, buy clothes for some poor children, pay a jail bird's fine or the interest on a mortgage for some old couple who ought to have been dead ten years ago. Cut it out and devote your time to the movement in the larger capacity. Fight the system and let its victims go to the devil." There was more on this same line that I can't remember. It sounded heartless and brutal. Debs looked at him out of his kind gray eyes and replied: "I know, J. A. (we used to call him J. A.), that you are philosophically correct, but for me to follow any other course than I do would be impossible. We are not constituted alike." Wayland turned abruptly on his heel and with apparent disgust left the room.

Comrade Debs and I in our numerous travels have talked a great deal over this incident. It would have pained us had we felt that our friend and co-worker had given a true expression to his real self. But happily we knew the inner man, having seen beneath the surface.

The above is a sample of the man's outside casing. To concede sympathy for an unfortunate was, with Wayland, the conceding of a weakness. It was wasting time, energy and sympathy on an effect at the expense of the cause. The beautiful and tender side of that great soul was zealously concealed from the gaze of the public.

The aid and assistance rendered to unfortunates by Comrade Wayland was artfully and carefully hidden from the world, even to the extent of denying to his most intimate friends and family any knowledge pertaining to such affairs. Recipients of his personal kindnesses were pledged to secrecy, and, personally, I believe that he would never have forgiven one who betrayed that trust.

The old adage that "murder will out" with Wayland and his humane deeds was no exception. Those of us in the office who were intimate with his every-day life understood and smiled at his eccentricities. He would rail at one of us for giving a quarter to a crippled tramp and then sneak from the office, find the tramp and fit him out with clothes, food, shoes and a little "stake."

ONCE upon a time I suddenly opened the door of his private office and, stepping in, found this "cold materialistic philosopher" in tears. He was reading a letter from the wife of one of the most worthless and no-account human skunks it was ever the misfortune of Girard Socialists to know. The husband was about to be sent to the penitentiary for defrauding some company with which he had been temporarily connected, the children were crying for bread and the family was destitute. A hundred dollars (\$100) was needed to keep the unworthy father and husband out of prison and alleviate the immediate suffering of the unfortunate family. Yes, they got the hundred dollars (\$100), but not a soul knew anything of the incident for months afterward and then learned of it only by the merest accident.

There is a young man in Girard who is ambitious to be something in the world, but who has a father little removed by the centuries of evolution from the barbarism of the brute cave man. This boy came to Wayland one day and told him of his troubles and ambitions. He wanted to go away where he could get into a different environment from that surrounding him in his own home. He needed money and clothes. Although his father had been and is today one of the most vicious opponents to Socialism and the Appeal to Reason we have ever had in the community, the boy did not

appeal to Comrade Wayland in vain. He was fitted out and sent on his way according to his heart's desire. Nothing was known of this until after Wayland's death, when the boy volunteered the information.

One Girard boy is completing a college course, the expenses of which have been paid by this same man. Another told me a short time ago that Mr. Wayland had offered to send him through college if he would agree to stay with it until he graduated.

It is unnecessary to enumerate all of the cases of beneficence, kindness and philanthropy of which this man Wayland was guilty, and of which the world knew nothing until after his death.

HE was different in almost all ways from other great men. The smallest difference was by no means that peculiar characteristic that prompted him to recoil from those things that would give him personal notoriety or glory. He steadfastly refused to accept any kind of a political or party office, go on the lecture platform, participate in conventions, public conferences, congresses or gatherings. He never permitted the publication of his picture or the use of his name when it could be avoided. (He wanted to establish the Appeal to Reason without letting the world know the identity of its editor and publisher, but such a course was prohib-

ited by the United States postal laws.) All this was the result of more of his philosophical reasoning.

He insisted that "familiarity bred contempt" and that if he could always remain a mystery to the public he would be able to wield more influence in the world's work.

Yet Wayland had one of the most pleasing and interesting personalities I ever encountered. Of the many who journeyed to Girard and met him none will ever forget his quiet voice, quick intellect and firm, commanding manner. Those who enjoyed a private hour in his company have departed with new hope, new life and purer thoughts. The contact could not help but make them better.

I have no fear of contradiction in making the sweeping statement that Comrade Wayland was the greatest and most successful personal propagandist the Socialist movement of America has ever had. To see him on the street in personal conversation, in hotels, on trains, anywhere, you could be sure, without hearing him, that he was talking Socialism. We who were intimate with him used to marvel at his never-flagging earnestness and optimism in the Great Hope. Apparently he thought of little else and seemed to feel that it was his sacred duty to convert anyone and everyone with whom he could secure a few moments' conversation.

THE old saying that none but cowards will take their own life will not in any sense hold good with J. A. Wayland. He was the one man of my acquaintance that I am sure did not in the slightest degree understand the feeling of physical fear.

Some twenty-five years ago at Harrisonville, Mo., where he was conducting a republican paper in a democratic community, he made certain proved charges against a corrupt sheriff. The officer was one of the "bad men" of that section, having killed several persons in his career. He met Wayland on the street and drawing his six-shooter threatened to shoot him on the spot. Wayland calmly looked him over, spit in his face, turned around and leisurely walked away.

At the time McDonough, who had been petted and befriended by everyone connected with the Appeal, with murder in his poisoned heart and a loaded instrument of death in his hand, was threatening the lives of Warren, Sheppard and others in one of the editorial rooms, Comrade Wayland appeared on the scene. The revolver was immediately thrust, cocked and loaded, against his breast and he was peremptorily ordered to leave the room. Without a flinch the keen gray eyes looked into those of the madman's, and, grasping the loaded gun in one hand, he cut in with, "You damn coward, you don't dare to shoot," while with the other he backed the burly brute out of the room.

Numerous were the incidents of this kind in the life and experiences of that remarkable man in which he demonstrated that death to him held no terrors.

ABOUT a year before his own tragic end the wife and companion of his bosom had been killed in an automobile accident. His children were scattered to the four winds, only one of them living in Girard at the time. Some were in college and some married and gone to established homes of their own. He occupied a large residence house with none of his loved ones near. Weary, tired, lonely and persecuted, he grew sick of it all and determined to precipitate the "long sleep."

Often since I have pictured in my mind's eye the last hours of our lonely and heart sick comrade. He who had buffeted the tide of public opinion for near a half century, suffered the bitterness of ridicule, grown gray and aged under the weight of abuse, misrepresentation and government persecution. Night after night alone in that big house musing over the past, knowing in his heart that he had spent a mighty energy in the awful struggle to point the way out of the wilderness for the children of men.

Many were the times that a light was seen shining through his study window as late as two or three o'clock in the morning.

Is it overdrawn to imagine him sitting there alone reviewing his life's work? Perhaps he shed tears, springing from no weak source, but tears from the loftiest fountain of emotion—tears that befit a warrior when his own troops desert him, a patriot when his countrymen rush to their own doom, a father when his children rebel against his love. Is it not probable that he viewed the world through tears and sentiments such as these in the last few hours of that life of tragedy? Following the tears I behold a calm stealing over this great man. He rises, paces the floor and murmurs, "Enough, enough! I have risked, dared and suffered more than my portion for an unappreciative world. It is all I lived for, and now I honestly feel that my work is over. The lamp is burned out." "The struggle under the competitive system is not worth the effort; let it pass."

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