

Everybody's Bookshelf—

Daughter Writes of Henry George's Life

Anna de Mille Makes Objective Study Of Single Taxer in New Biography

By Basil Woon

Having frittered away my space yesterday with Mencken, the Wolf of the Reviews, I find myself today with an absurd miscellany—an astonishing romantic novel of almost 600 pages which has something of Maugham, something of Peter B. Kyne but more of Harold Bell Wright (and it's not such a bad mixture for entertainment purposes, at that); a volume published by Harper's which present-

in tabloid form the great expressions of human rights; a biography of Henry George, the only man (he dia it in San Francisco) to evolve a potent answer to socialism; and Simple. If you don't mind I'll start with Simple, surely the most be-guiling hero in modern fiction.



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Simple is a philosopher of the colored race; I gave of him to a colored lady of my acquaintance to read, one Peggy Lee Walton, and she said, "I don't like him." I told her that Simple's inspired stories, undoubtedly the most poignant humor of the year, were by Langston Hughes, and I argued with her that Mr. Hughes, by finding the deep pathos behind the behavior of a man of his own race, was probably doing his bit for non-discrimination and all that. I have no idea if I convinced her but she did read two more stories in the book. This is called "Simple Speaks His Mind" and it is one of those Simon & Schuster books available both in cloth and paper binding. The words in the latter are the same, the cost to you is much less. (I have been watching this experiment of Dick Simon's and shall have a word to say about it shortly.)

I have so much to cover today that I can't give Langston Hughes and Simple the space they deserve. I will simply say that if you can read any one of these superb short stories without laughing and crying at the same time you're harder-shelled than I.

Daughter's Objective View

The new biography of Henry George is by his daughter, Anna George de Mille, mother of Agnes de Mille. It is amazing for its impartiality and is, despite its authorship, a true biography. Anna George de Mille must be in many respects as remarkable as her father. It is not every woman who can look ob-

I found this biography, published by the Chapel Hill Press or North Carolina University, one of the most stimulating I have read in years. It is called simply, "Henry George: Citizen of the World."

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jectively at a parent who has become in her lifetime an immortal. Nor is it every daughter of a great man who is capable of dedicating herself to so important a task as making him live again in a book. George was already a world figure at 38 when she was born.

Henry George, author of "Progress and Poverty," the book that was written in San Francisco and that shook the world, was a Philadelphian, born in 1839, already a third generation American, and yet he was to earn the proudest title ever given any man, that of "Citizen of the World." When he was a boy he went around the world as a sailor; returning, he found the country filled with unemployed and found a berth on a lighthouse tender to San Francisco, where he paid for his discharge. He had a brief period of adventure in the Frazer Valley gold fields and at 19 grew a beard—a red one. Back in San Francisco he was a journeyman printer, marrying when his bride was 19 and he had exactly 50c. A few years later, Henry George learned that he could write—the first newspaper article he wrote was a description of the Lincoln mourning decorations for The Alta California. A little while later he was managing editor of The San Francisco Times (\$50 a week). It was in this period that he studied (and wrote, for The Overland Monthly among other papers) the work that was a preliminary to his great discovery of Single Tax, which was to convulse the country in a time of great stress.

Publishers Rejected It

James McClatchy, of The Sacramento Bee, was one of those who encouraged him to expand his lectures on land policy into a book. Appleton, Harper's & Scribner's condemned the book as too revolutionary, so Henry George, with

printer friends, set up the type himself in San Francisco. In 1880 Appleton, impressed by the reception given the first printing, brought out a trade edition. It was a sensation which within a year or two made George a world figure.

HENRY GEORGE. By Anna George de Mille. University of North Carolina Press. \$3.50.

Few Americans have had as wide an influence on the social thought of their day as did Henry George. Not only for his fellow Americans but for such Europeans as Tolstoy and Shaw he dramatized a New World doctrine which professed to find the solution to the world's economic ills through a single tax on land values.

In "Progress and Poverty" George set down his theory of the origin of value in land. For millions, the book marked a first interest in economics. Principally this was so because George was able to give his words the impassioned ring of a crusader rather than the cold, logical bareness of the economics textbooks which tend to forget that their dismal science is about people.

This biography of George is done by his daughter with a loving warmth which doesn't get in the way of accuracy. Great multitudes looked upon him as one who had put his finger on the basic illness of "modern" society: increasing poverty in the midst of burgeoning wealth.

To him they gave their support when in 1886 and again in 1897 he ran for Mayor of the City of New York. His daughter's "life with father" is a warm document, filled with wonderful pictures of Henry George spreading a doctrine of economic hope and salvation to a world puzzled by its own successes.

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HENRY GEORGE, by Anna George de Mille (University of North Carolina). A biography of the Single Taxer by his younger daughter, who died three years ago. The book, in common with many memoirs of famous and controversial public figures written by their offspring, is one-sided and strongly sympathetic, but it is also ably put together. It explains the origins and course of George's revolutionary thinking, which flowered in his "Progress and Poverty," and it makes understandable his wide influence on his contemporaries. One of the major distinctions between George and so many other reformers was that George maintained to the end that even though his theories were sound, there could be no justification for employing force to put them into practice. Illustrated with cartoons and family photographs.

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