

A Lovable Reformer

HENRY GEORGE: Citizen of the World. By Anna George de Mille. Edited by Don C. Shoemaker. With an Introduction by Agnes de Mille. Illustrated. 276 pp. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. \$3.50.

By R. L. DUFFUS

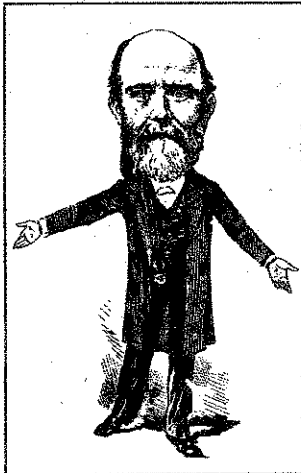
THERE can never have been a more lovable reformer, of the secular sort, than Henry George. His granddaughter, Agnes de Mille, says of him in her introduction to this book: "The most astonishing aspect of the Henry George legend was his effect on all people with whom he came into personal contact; without exception every one, man or woman, was overwhelmed."

As with the man, so with his doctrine. One could disagree with it but one couldn't work up a hate for it. Everybody could feel the throb of a purpose in it—to set humanity free. Maybe, they might reason, the single tax was the way, and maybe it wasn't, but the purpose was pure. Incidentally, Henry George was never satisfied with the name "single tax," which "did not describe his philosophy of freedom but only indicated the fiscal means for applying that philosophy."

In addition to being lucky in his own personality Henry George was lucky in his family: lucky in the woman he married; lucky in his children, including daughter Anna, who did everything except the final editing and correcting on the present book; lucky in his granddaughter, Agnes de Mille, who writes a brief but valuable introduction and who is not unknown to this generation as a dancer and choreographer. Genius and charm manifestly ran in the family Henry George got started.

its activities." Henry George proposed to penalize people who owned land and didn't use it properly; contrariwise he proposed to reward "productive industry," big and little, the factory owner, the farmer and the mechanic alike.

A great many people must have followed Henry George, worshipped him, voted for him when he ran for public office, mourned for him when he died as a result of his last campaign for Mayor of New York, in October, 1897—and scarcely have understood a bit of his economic theory. All they knew was that he seemed to love common people without hating the rich and uncommon—a rare, rare achievement, then as now. He was for free trade, he didn't care for unnecessary government, he was as unpretentious as an old shoe, and he believed in immortality and the brotherhood of man.



Australian cartoon, 1890. Henry George.

The politicians could and did count him out and the economists could find flaws in his economy as thick as raisins in a Christmas pudding, but nobody could help feeling that he was a great and good man. The Irish reformers, the Austrians, Tolstoy in Russia, the man next door—all seem to have had this perception.

The single tax hasn't yet been put into effect, as almost all of us were reminded at the middle of March. Billions of dollars, in fact, are levied to pay for past wars or prepare against future attacks, and these billions do not reflect increases in the true value of land. Henry George planned for a better world than we have achieved. But whatever one thinks of his planning and thinking, he is a personality we ought not to forget, and everyone connected in any way with this readable and charming book deserves thanks. We don't have to know all about "Progress and Poverty" but it will do us good to know something about Henry George.

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Single Tax Advocate

Reviewed by Robert Ordway Foote

HENRY GEORGE, CITIZEN OF THE WORLD by Anna George de Mille. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. 276 pp. \$3.50.

LONG BEFORE the advent of those messiahs of tax reform, Upton Sinclair and Francis E. Townsend, this state was given a reputation for economic eccentricity by a man whose projected cure-all, after more than a half-century, still excites admiration at least equivalent to its ridicule—the Single Tax.

Californians are quite used to seeing this panacea on their ballots. It never has been adopted but it will not die. However, few Californians exercising their choice upon a Single Tax amendment realize that its originator, Henry George, was a Californian at the time he evolved his idea of curbing unearned increment by taxing nothing but land. One of the greatest reformers, moreover, that this state ever produced, a man hailed alternately as genius and crackpot, respected and reviled, loved and hated as have been few others in American political history. A man who, but for his untimely death a few days before election, undoubtedly would have been named mayor of New York, with prospects ahead of greater preferment.

HENRY GEORGE'S life is told, with remarkable objectivity considering the relationship, by his youngest daughter, Anna George de Mille, who herself passed on before it was published. Her long labor of love is told in an introduction by the reformer's grand-daughter, Agnes de Mille, the famed ballet dancer and producer.

It was a life which came up against realities at an early age and experienced much hardship and grief. The undersized, red-headed son of a respectable middle-class Philadelphia family, he was sent to sea in his early teens

by a father wise enough to recognize the lad's restlessness. He voyaged to the Orient, came home a man before his years, went ashore to learn the printer's trade and before he was of legal age, had worked his way on a ship to San Francisco and was struggling along there, when he met a beautiful girl who ran away from home to marry him. Together they faced deprivation that was sometimes physically bitter, as Henry George gradually made his way out of the composing and into the editorial rooms of San Francisco and Sacramento papers. He became noted for his fearless editorials, was hailed as the prophet of San Francisco's common people. There, in the midst of other reforming movements which he supported or originated, he evolved his Single Tax theory.

NO EASTERN publisher wanted "Progress and Poverty," his book, so with the aid of his printing friends it was privately issued in San Francisco, to become a world sensation. Soon an Eastern publisher was bringing it out by the thousands. Henry George went abroad to speak on his theory, returned to become one of the leaders of advanced thought in New York. Two days before the election which historians believe would have made him mayor, his funeral became one of the greatest ovations ever given any citizen of that metropolis.

Henry George was dead. But his Single Tax Theory based on the idea that labor is the only true wealth, is still taught to earnest people in many special classes right here in California today. Thousands believe that it lies the way to eventual economic peace for the world.

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begin to suspect its scientists of deliberately working on peacetime projects rather than atomic energy, and has distrusted them ever since. Now the Government is "directing" science more and more along practical and political lines, with the result that pure research is being neglected—and Dr. Langmuir believes this trend will be-

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