

STORY OF A GREAT ESSAY*

By Will Lissner

Back in the dark days of 1932, a man who is foremost among America's few living exponents of belles-lettres wrote in his diary under the date of Oct. 27: "...I should think someone might soon be rediscovering Henry George..." Four days later he recorded: "I have been looking over the biography of Henry George, by his son, Harry... There should be a better one, for George was undeniably a great man." The critic was to have an opportunity to show how such a biography should be written; that winter Scribner's asked him for a paper on it. June 15 found him in Vidago in Portugal "working steadily at quite high pressure" on the overdue article. "I hope it will call attention to him," he added in the diary. By June 26 he was able to note: "I am done with Henry George and shall leave here tomorrow. What a great man he was..." The aftermath came on July 29: "Scribner's people seem satisfied... I suppose all the single-taxers in the country will curse me afresh."

That was how Albert Jay Nock came to write "Henry George, Unorthodox American." How the tabloid biography came to be the thing it is needs for explanation the de-

tails of his career, which need only be listed here to recall them to the reader. For as essayist, historian and classical scholar withal, Mr. Nock has been one of the chief catalyzers of the intellectual fermentations of his time. He was an editor of the old Freeman (1920-1924). He has written "How Diplomats Make War" (with Francis Neilson, 1915); "Myth of a Guilty Nation" (1922); "On Doing the Right Thing and Other Essays" (1928); "Francis Rabelais, the Man His Work" (with C. R. Wilson, 1929); "The Book of Journeyman," (1932); "The Theory of Education" (1932); "A Journal of These Days" (1934); "A Journey Into Rabelais's France" (1934); "Our Enemy the State" (1935); "Free Speech and Plain Language" (1937). He has edited "Selected Works of Charles F. Browne (Artemus Ward)" (1924); "Francis Rabelais" (Urquhart-Le Matteaoux translation, with C. R. Wilson, 2 vols., 1931). He has served as visiting professor of American history and government at St. Stephen's College, where he took his bachelor's degree and where he was honored with a Litt. D.

* This essay, "Henry George, Unorthodox American," has been reproduced in pamphlet form by the Henry George School of Social Science, and is offered at five cents a copy, postpaid.