

Joe Thompson

ON SEPTEMBER 17, Joseph S. Thompson of San Francisco died. Born on June 16th 1878, the eldest of a family of seven of whom the well known novelist Kathleen Norris was one, he started work at the age of fifteen and without the benefit of a college and university education, succeeded in establishing a highly successful electrical business and becoming a life fellow of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers. And yet, as he put it, he was "not regarded in my family as a good business man."

His successful business career, however, is but a part of his very full life. Joseph Thompson was a man of great compassion who did more than just commiserate with the unfortunates of this world. He belonged to many societies which strove to help those who were handicapped in some way, either specifically by some personal disability or generally because of adverse social conditions and poverty. He himself lost an arm in an accident in 1906 when he tried to board a moving train, but this did not stop him from learning to cope with most of the usual "two-handed" jobs, and it certainly did not stop him from writing many books and pamphlets on the causes and effects of poverty. He was a fervent supporter of the philosophy and economic teachings of Henry George and was convinced of the efficacy of the remedy George propounded. He became President of the Henry George Schools in New York, and San Francisco and served as President (later, President Emeritus) of the International Union for Land-Value Taxation and Free Trade.

His interests also included music and public speaking—at which he excelled having a good sense of humour, easy style and keen wit. At the Bohemian Club, of which he was at one time President (as his father had been before him) he was regarded as one of their most brilliant speakers.

His zeal for life stayed with him right to the end despite failing health in the last two years as evidenced by his writing of "The Pre-Posthumous Papers of Thompson— a Partly Truthful Biography." This catalogued his wide and varied interests which encompassed business, the arts, civic works, politics, and—in the largest measure—the humanities.

He is survived by his widow, Germaine, to whom we extend our sincere condolences.