

New Adventure for Matthew Ramage

By GEORGE MARAVELAS

MATTHEW RAMAGE was a personality one would not easily forget, even though the encounter was brief. His clear, incisive speech; still vigorous after nine decades; was beautiful and heartwarming. There never was a more dedicated or able Georgist. His enthusiasm was a spur to everyone interested in our cause. Widely read in history, religion, philosophy and political economy, he saw all men and nations, all institutions, in a process of evolution. There could be no standing still or living in a vacuum. Each individual, he felt, was responsible for his actions, and each would be rewarded accordingly. He believed the path to peace, happiness and abundance for mankind could be reached by conforming our economic and social systems with natural law.

Mr. Ramage came over to the social philosophy of Henry George through a personal experience which reveals the sterling character he possessed. As a young man he purchased some lots in Ontario, Canada. After a year or so the land greatly increased in value. He once remarked to the writer that he was not sure what caused the increase—but he knew that it was not through any particular effort or ability on his part. This was good fortune, but he did not think he had earned it entirely through his own effort. It started him thinking, and the thinking crystallized when he heard a speech on Henry George at a labor meeting in Toronto by the "Philadelphia Cyclone," Herman V. Hentzel. Mr. Ramage often remarked that Hentzel "was the best stump-speaker" he had ever heard and dated his conversion to the single tax idea from that speech. Shortly afterward he read *The Land Question* and followed that with *Progress and Poverty*. He was readily convinced. While living in the New England States he became a bitter foe of tariffs when he heard a hired orator say to textile workers (earning \$3 a week) "Are you going to let the pauper labor of Europe take your jobs away?" At that time the American textile industry had protection to the tune of 114 per cent on all imported fabrics. Still, all over New England dozens of mills were closed.

At the turn of the century, Washington was the center of considerable activity among the followers of George. Mr. Ramage was president of the Single Tax Propaganda Association of Washington, D. C. from 1895 to 1905. This organization and affiliated groups sponsored a contest for a novel based on the single tax. A prize of \$10,000 was offered and contributions came from all parts of the world. The plan was dropped and the money returned because of Henry George, Jr.'s disapproval.

Mr. Ramage, through his newspaper connections and prospecting ventures, came to know quite intimately such eminent public men as Champ Clark, Bainbridge Colby and Newton D. Baker. Many Congressmen and Senators visited him on his farm in Maryland on the banks of the Potomac, to discuss *Progress and Poverty* and quote passages by the page. Few of this generation realize the impact of *Progress and Poverty* on the political men of a half-century ago.

Matthew Ramage has "gone to the other side of life," as he would have put it, but the

life he lived here will be a constant challenge and source of inspiration to all who knew him. One is at loss for the proper words to do honor to his character and personality. We turn to Shakespeare and say with him:

"His life was gentle, and the elements

So mixed in him that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world, "This was a man!"

Matthew Ramage renewed his Henry George News subscription for five years in June, 1954, saying he hoped to read every copy. Where would you like us to send them, Mr. Ramage?

His letters were always in beautiful handwriting which showed no trace of feebleness, despite his 90 years. Also they were delightfully gay, polite and even mischievous: "Please enclose it in an envelope," he wrote, "all the nice ladies in this hotel read my mail and I don't want them to get jealous." In the same letter, last November, he said, "if reincarnation is true, and I think it is, there is a chance for us [Georgists] yet."

George Maravelas, Robert E. Allen, Jr. and other Washington Georgists feel bereft without their good friend. Mrs. Ramage and two sons survive. Please do not be sorrowful, Mrs. Ramage. In the words of George Maravelas, "It is the beginning of another adventure for him."

He was a retired geologist and oil prospector, and had an almost priceless collection of violins, among which was the famous "White House violin" formerly owned by a White House employee during Lincoln's administration.