

BOOK REVIEWS.

HENRY FORD'S OWN STORY. As told to *Rose Wilder Lane*. New York: Ellis O. Jones. Pp. 184. Price \$1.00 net.

This little book tells us "how a farmer boy rose to the power that goes with many millions, yet never lost touch with humanity." It is an interesting book and worth while reading for people who wish to become acquainted with self-made men who have made a great success in life. The story begins with a hot summer day on which a thrifty farmer was making hay when he was called home from the fields to go for the doctor in a hurry, and later, after the laborers had been driven to the barn by rain leaving two loads still un-gathered in the fields, this farmer, William Ford, told his men of the birth of a second son whose name was Henry.

The first noteworthy event of Henry's life is the mending of his play-fellow's watch which he took to pieces one Sunday during church time. Without going into details of the development of his life, including his long struggle in perfecting a motor car, and the equally difficult task of financing its manufacture, we will quote here for the benefit of our readers the point at which he proposed to the world of businessmen the attempt to pay a minimum wage of five dollars a day to his workmen in his automobile machine-shop. We read in the book before us:

"He had been studying relief plans, methods of factory management in Germany, welfare work of all kinds. When he had finished his consideration of those reports he threw overboard all the plans other people had made and announced his own.

"'Every man who works for me is going to get enough for a comfortable living,' he said. 'If an able-bodied man can't earn that, he's either lazy or ignorant. If he's lazy, he's sick. We'll have a hospital. If he's ignorant, he wants to learn. We'll have a school. Meantime figure out in the accounting bureau a scale of profit-sharing that will make every man's earnings at least five dollars a day. The man that gets the smallest wages gets the biggest share of the profits. He needs it most.'

"On January 12, 1914, Ford launched into the industrial world a most startling bombshell.

"'Five dollars a day for every workman in the Ford factory!'

"'He's crazy!' other manufacturers said, aghast. 'Why, those dirty, ignorant foreigners don't earn half that! You can't run a business that way!'

"'That man Ford will upset the whole industrial situation. What is he trying to do, anyway?' they demanded when every Detroit factory workman grew restless.

"The news spread rapidly. Everywhere workmen dropped their tools and hurried to the Ford factory. Five dollars a day!

"When Ford reached the factory in the morning of the second day after

his announcement, he found Woodward avenue crowded with men waiting to get a job in the shops. An hour later the crowds had jammed into a mob, which massed outside the buildings and spread far into adjoining streets, pushing, struggling, fighting to get closer to the doors.

"It was not safe to open them. That mass of humanity, pushed from behind, would have wrecked the offices. The manager of the employment department opened a window and shouted to the frantic crowd that there were no jobs, but the sound of his voice was lost in the roar that greeted him. He shut the window and telephoned the police department for reserves.

"Still the crowds increased every moment by new groups of men wildly eager to get a job which would pay them a comfortable living. Ford looked down on them from his window.

"'Can't you make them understand we haven't any jobs?' he asked the employment manager. The man, disheveled, breathing hard, and hoarse with his efforts to make his voice heard, shook his head.

"'The police are coming,' he said.

"'Then there'll be somebody hurt,' Ford predicted. 'We can't have that. Get the fire hose and turn it on the crowd. That will do the business.'

"A moment later a solid two-inch stream of water shot from the doors of the Ford factory. It swept the struggling men half off their feet; knocked the breath from their bodies; left them gasping, startled, dripping. They scattered. In a few moments the white stream from the hose was sweeping back and forth over a widening space bare of men. When the police arrived the crowd was so dispersed that the men in uniform marched easily through it without using their clubs.

"For a week a special force of policemen guarded the Ford factory, turning back heartsick men, disappointed in their hope of a comfortable living wage.

"It was a graphic illustration of the harm done the whole machine by the loss of energy stored in money, held idle in the hands of a few men. . . .

"Six weeks after the plan went into effect in his factory a comparison was made between the production for January, 1914, and January, 1913. In 1913, with 16,000 men working on the actual production of cars for ten hours a day, 16,000 cars were made and shipped. Under the new plan 15,800 men working eight hours a day made and shipped 26,000 cars.

"Again Ford had shown the value of that intangible, 'impractical' thing—a spirit of friendliness and good will.

"'Do the thing that is best for everybody and it will be best for you in the end.' That was his creed. He hoped to prove its truth so that no one would doubt it.

"Nor is Ford a philanthropist, with the ordinary implications that follow the word. He is a hard-headed, practical man, who has made a success in invention, in organization, in the building of a great business. His contribution to the world is a practical contribution. His message is a practical message."

The last chapter is devoted to a discussion of the European war. Mr. Ford thinks that the war is mainly due to the greed of nations and that if this greed had not abolished the golden rule there would have been no war. Strange to say, this strange pacifistic Mr. Ford has offered to our government the free use of his factory for ammunition purposes and any other practical services whenever the country shall have need of it.

OSCAR WILDE—HIS LIFE AND CONFESSIONS. By *Frank Harris* with further Memoirs by *George Bernard Shaw*. 2 vols. \$5.00. Frank Harris, 29 Waverly Place, New York.

Grasping his self-imposed subject-task in a distinctly human manner without taking on the air of feigned austerity, and yet with a laudable spirit of true charity, Mr. Harris has done in this now popularized version of the bizarre and garish Wilde an engaging labor of exploration and verification. The biographer, infusing tremendous truth into the treatment of the *Confessions*, is very rarely at fault; however, one may execrate the turpitude and obliquity, to which are devoted many pages of the two-volume book. No one ought to take umbrage at the rightly reasoned treatment, though, when mulled over by theorists, afflicted with the critical temperament, not discovering the saving modicum of pulchritude, it may be slated by the supersensorious as the un-beautiful verdict of mournful veracity and damnable awfulness, tinged by the vivid verisimilitude of the artist. For one thing, there is no mock-morality, no affectation of a magnified shockingness, no masquerading, no garbling of records, no knavish trickery of the muckraker. It is reporting in *excelsis*, at times in *extremis*.

Mr. Harris "seen his dooty and done it," to borrow a chaste and classic gem of locution from the diction of the erstwhile mayor of L. I. City. Mr. Harris does not care a peppercorn—neither trimming nor truckling—whether folk like to learn the truth, or no. That's not his business. He's concerned in presenting a portraiture, drawn with as rare fidelity as can be done with the light at hand; and in this he has succeeded admirably in far more than a mere billbrady fashion.

Obviously, the blasé and jaded roués—the woods are full of them—visiting with a vengeance odium on offenders, may term it salacious sextravaganza. The underworld, too, may snicker and look askance at the Harris representation of the half-epicure, half-esthete knight-errant of the paradoxical paraphrase; "they'll" sneer at Oscar's gaucherie in juggling therapeutic fibs.

Even, if as orphic or chiaroscuro, it should be rejected by every one for its transgressing at one tangent the canon of idealism, the book is to be commended for its exquisitely uncolored candor, and the fine, very fine passages,—far too numerous to justify me in selecting one or two as illustrations—studding one of the really great masterpieces of contemporary portrait-painting. When you read this book, you know the real Wilde. That's the art of Harris.

Frank Harris—get the measure of the man—has distinguished himself for his painstaking exactitude, tempered by Christian charity, in carrying out his parlous purpose, after all, so acceptably. HILTON B. SONNEBORN, SR.