

# **EARTH-HUNGER AND OTHER ESSAYS**

**BY**  
WILLIAM GRAHAM SUMNER

**EDITED BY**  
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**NEW HAVEN: YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
LONDON: HUMPHREY MILFORD  
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS  
MCMXIII**

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FIRST PRINTED NOVEMBER, 1913.      1,000 COPIES

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## PREFACE

**D**uring the three years now elapsed since the publication of "War and Other Essays," it has become increasingly clear to the publishers and to the editor of that collection that their original enterprise should be followed up by another volume or two. There remain a number of Professor Sumner's shorter productions which have never been printed or which have been published in obscure, scattered, or inaccessible places.

I feel this need of extending our enterprise the more strongly because I believe that a great deal of Sumner's writing has not grown old, and is not destined to grow old. It has been impressed upon me, as I have become more familiar with his essays of twenty and thirty years ago, that the issues which he treated, as he treated them, are always and everywhere with us. They are not of one time or one place. They are always with us because they are part of what Sumner so often calls "life here on earth." It was given to him to seize upon social issues in their essential and vital bearings; the blade of his insight never stuck in the husk of a matter.

Now it has seemed to me, in my own experience with Sumner, and in my teaching, that such an attitude toward the questions of societal life is, for the young at least, the one best adapted to open — wrench open, if you will — the gates of the mind and introduce the impulse to independent thinking. I do not mean at all that this result is to be attained by an unresisting acceptance of the forcefully expressed opinions of a compelling reasoner; in fact, I

believe that, in the case of Sumner, many a man has been goaded to think things out for himself for very rage at the conclusive manner in which Sumner used to dispose of some of his pet or traditional notions. Sometimes such a man came to agree with Sumner; again he believed that he had won the right not to assent — but in either case there had come to him an awakening in the matter of his own mental powers and life. This is why so many men who have eventually come to dissent from Sumner's positions, yet look back upon him as an intellectual awakener. The difficult thing about getting a vision in the large is in the attainment of an elevated plane of thought; if someone can lift you to it, you will find room enough there to range away from the exact spot upon which you were originally set down. It is the "lift" which is crucial — and that it is which only the strong and positive man, who has wrought himself up beyond the pull of the trivial and traditional, can give.

I lay a good deal of stress upon these considerations because they are the ones which have led me to continue the task of editor. I see no reason for collections of essays as such; the work of most of us, as it seems to me, must die with us, or before us — it would even be a disservice to galvanize it into a momentary resurrection. But I feel that this is not so with Sumner's work, and so I think it a privilege to assist in making it more readily available in more permanent form.

But this leads me to add that, although I hold the views I have tried to express, I have yet excluded, at least for the present, Sumner's treatment of certain issues which seem to me more technical and local. I have therefore included little on the topics of protectionism and sound money, and on other subjects of a more strictly economic order — although I believe that a number of Sumner's

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essays of this type deserve re-publication, and should get it, for the sake of his method of presentation and the breadth of his perspective rather than for the sake of adding to technical economic controversy in any possible way.

The following essays are here printed, so far as I have been able to discover, for the first time: The Teacher's Unconscious Success; The Scientific Attitude of Mind; Earth Hunger; Economics and Politics; Purposes and Consequences; Rights; Equality. We have been able to date all of these except the last three. There is no direct evidence as to the time when these were written, but it is safe to say that they come out of the period between 1900 and 1906. The manuscript of these three seems to form part of the studies which preceded "Folkways" and may have been designed originally to form part of that volume.

Although "Earth Hunger" is the title essay, it has seemed fitting to introduce this volume with Professor Sumner's brief autobiographical sketch, and by two essays which, if not strictly autobiographical, yet reveal certain salient characteristics of the man and of his attitude toward his work.

**A. G. KELLER**

New Haven, Conn.,  
September 17, 1913