

ers who compare "The Grand Alliance" with Thucydides and Tacitus should refresh their memories by reading, once again, "The Peloponnesian War" and "Agricola."

Some of our literary critics are suffering from "inflationary tendencies," and such a statement as, "This makes a book scarcely paralleled in literature" does not make sense. A testimonial so sweeping could be of no service to any writer of our time. Still, we must admit the habit of reviewers in saying a book "is the greatest ever," and "There has been nothing like it" cannot be cured, for it is all part of the commercial system under which we grovel.

New York

Henry George in a New Dimension

Henry George: Citizen of the World. By Anna George de Mille. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1950, 276 pp., index, \$3.50.

Henry George Jr.'s life of his father is among the important American biographies; and not, I think, because the younger George was a first-string biographer. Simply, he had an important American story to tell, and told it with a high regard for essentials which spoke better for the respect and conviction George inspired in his children—among many others—than mere filial regard could have done. Henry George Jr. believed in his father. He reflected the great earnestness the elder George had dedicated to his cause. The result was a story of the first significance.

Unfortunately, the younger George's earnestness appears to have made him impatient of what may have seemed to him irrelevant details. His life, accordingly, is written with a certain sobriety: it does not fully reflect the sunlight and personality which Henry George undoubtedly possessed. Anna George de Mille has done nothing less than add a dimension to the old life of George—a dimension compounded of feminine taste, descriptive data, personal recollections, and a variety of observations and remarks culled from private and public papers. They implement her brother's life at many points. She brings her father, as it were, back again with his old quickness and social interests; and, too, with something of the old surprise which attended his phenomenal rise to fame and controversy.

Much of the selfless spirit of her brother directed Mrs. de Mille's pen.

Had she had her way, her own place in the story would have been all but ignored. Kindly editorial hands have righted the balance. But a thousand details regarding the home life of the Georges, his traits and manners of expression, and activities, add bloom and substance to the older narrative. Tom Johnson's chubby intimacy with the George family is informally underscored. Most of the famous incidents—the crystallization of George's theory, the mayoralty campaigns, the meeting with Herbert Spencer, among others—are retold with fresh details. The style of writing is effective; I am not, for instance, likely to forget that Henry Hyndman, the English Socialist, whom the Georges visited in London, made an unpleasant and frightening impression on little Anna George by pretending to bite off the toes of her doll. An excellent section of illustrations throws light on the manner in which George impressed contemporary cartoonists, sympathetic and otherwise.

It makes a gay, earnest story—I think the word is gallant. And if it does not drastically revise any of the key incidents or conclusions of the earlier life, it is calculated to remind the attentive reader of the compelling nature of the material, and of the fact that Henry George is yet to be seized and assimilated into the American experience. It seems odd to say that so famous a man as George, now over half a century dead, has yet to be understood, but I would so think. That George worked for humanity is universally admitted.¹ That he was a stirring and widely-known figure is self-evident. But what remains of him? His family, to whom George, so to speak, never died, was hardly in position to appreciate the force of this question. The reader who has no family connection with George, and who reads his daily paper with a sense of participation in (or, at least, stake in) the British experiment, the developments in Russian foreign policy, the atom bomb enigma, cultural, personal, and cosmic problems of a wide variety, can better ask what George means to him, and how he can fit the man into his living and contemporaneous thoughts.

He cannot, however, answer his own questions without, at the same time, adequately appreciating what George meant to his own time; and he cannot determine this without determining the position of George relative to others who also sought to come to grips with that time.

¹It is true that aspects of George's life and opinions have been viewed critically. The adequacy of his analysis of the Haymarket Affair has been doubted, for instance. His relationship to the Populist Revolt and to various efforts of labor have, among other matters, been questioned. The questions have, as a rule, been better than the attendant discussions, such as they have been.

George liked to refer to his "truth" as a star which others besides himself must have seen. An excellent figure of speech which, in addition, suggests the presence of other stars. Mrs. de Mille's book does not mention Edward Bellamy. It does not mention Henry Demarest Lloyd. Yet these worthies also wrote famous books, and also made an impression on their times. On occasion, of course, they disagreed with George, for instance, on the significance of the single tax. Ignatius Donnelly is a giant of the period, as is Eugene V. Debs, whose career thrusts itself closer to our very own times. Is it possible to assay the value and influence of George's ideas without reference to theirs?

The fact is that the meaning of "influence" is often grossly misunderstood. George has been invidiously compared with Karl Marx, whose living presence is to be discerned in every major contemporary event. But we fail to realize fully that history is no automatic phonograph which plays its own tunes. It plays the discs we put into it. Such intellectual power and humanity as George possessed have not failed us. We have been inept at fitting them into our thought, and, first of all, fitting them into their own time. A reviewer of Mrs. de Mille's present book, writing in *The New Leader*, believes, for example, that "in his faith in progress and in unbridled individualism, George speaks for nineteenth century America." I might be clearer on what this means if it were explained what century Marx spoke for.

Let us understand the social and intellectual circumstances which created George's view of life and society—they are far from clear today. Let us better understand the place of George's crusade in the troublous post-Civil War decades—as astounding in what they had to offer in native social thinking and action as in "Gilded Age" excesses. We will then find less difficulty in discerning the differences which separate those times from ours, and the similarities which unite us; and of discovering the applicability of the George theses to our own times. With Anna George de Mille's book, the George family has concluded its work. It is for others who say that they concern themselves with the present and future to take up the story.

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