

BOOK REVIEWS

Henry George. By CHARLES ALBRO BARKER. (Oxford University Press, New York, 1955., Pp. xvii, 696. \$9.50)

The author of this volume, who holds his bachelor's degree and doctorate from Yale, taught for twelve years at Stanford University in that California where Henry George wrote two of his eight books (the remaining six were written in New York), and has been since 1945 Professor of American History at the Johns Hopkins University, became interested in Henry George while he was a resident of California during the depression of the '30's. He quotes his qualifications for writing such a biography as follows: "My family had been Republican since 1856; I had cast my first vote for Norman Thomas; and I believed, as I still do, that at the time the New Deal was essentially what the United States needed. I know now that if I had designed my own background to avoid contact with Georgism, I could have chosen no points of political attachment more indifferent to the ideas of the subject of this biography than these three— traditional Republicanism, Thomas socialism and the New Deal." From this beginning he has come the long road to write the definitive biography of Henry George. More than a biography, it is a chapter in American intellectual and emotional history.

The present volume is not only the life story of one of America's most exciting social thinkers and crusaders for reform but it vividly recreates the atmosphere of mid and late 19th century America. It was 1839 when Henry George was born in Philadelphia, 1855 when he left home to sail as foremast boy to Calcutta. The author tells of George's career in California journalism and politics, his writings as a theorist in political economy, his phenomenal impact on contemporary social thought and labor and reform politics following the publication of his world-famous *Progress and Poverty*.

As Professor Barker says, "Three generations ago Henry George electrified great numbers of our ancestors on both sides of the Atlantic and in Australia and New Zealand. There is no other figure who quite compares with him. Driven by a demon of the spirit, an inner force which combined love of God with love of man and desire for fame, George managed to find the language with which to say what many men were ready, and some were longing to hear." Professor Barker's new interpretation shows that the single tax for which Henry George is famed today is more largely the creation of the George followers than

of the man himself. Henry George's own greater importance lay in stimulating land reform and social reform in Britain, labor and urban reform politics at home and in offering doctrinaire free trade criticism to American tariff policy.

George's enemy was the slavery of poverty and with conviction he threw himself against it. He thought he had a strategy deeper than Congressional appropriation for technical assistance. He captured the loyalty of millions with that idea.

As Raymond Moley puts it, "While I am not a George man, I have long been interested in Henry George and his very great contribution to American economic thinking. He has been represented, of course, as a man with one idea but he is much more important than that. In fact you can disagree with his fundamental premise, which is that poverty is increasing, and disagree with his solution, which is the single tax, and still find a great deal of economic knowledge and rather original thinking in the body of his work. Therefore, a book like Barker's, which brings out all aspects in a manner that is completely objective and scholarly, is invaluable."

George's many undertakings were bound by a chain of consistent purpose but the consistency was more apparent to a man of George's breath of view than to a narrower soul. In his time he could be a Republican and a Democrat, a party bolter, a Cleveland man and a Bryan man. He could be an admirer of Roman Catholicism and yet an extreme and effective critic of bishops and Pope. He could assist socialism but fight socialists and their doctrines. In one lifetime he drew many threads together. When he died he was honored as no other American between Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt.

It is the story of such a multifarious and yet homogenous personality that Professor Barker has told—and told very well indeed.

Buffalo

RUTH M. EAGELS

A History of Columbia College on Morningside. (Columbia University Press, Morningside Heights, New York, 1954. Pp. viii, 284. \$4.00)

This is the story of "a tradition reinterpreted and revitalized." Columbia began two hundred years ago—with a charter of 1754—as an institution established with the "good design of promoting