

## Our Own Worst Enemy

THE MAN IN THE STREET. By Thomas A. Bailey. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1948. 334 pp. \$5.

Reviewed by EDWARD L. BERNAYS

WORK such as Bailey's is long overdue. There has been no dearth of histories that have presented the past from the standpoint of biography, conquest, war, politics, economics, and culture, but little investigation has been made of the impact of public opinion on history. Mr. Bailey carefully examines indices of public opinion available to him and presents his facts and interpretations in 318 pages, most of them interesting, well-documented, and studded with a wealth of quotations. He relies, in the period before 1935, on acts of Congress, on studies of the public mind as revealed in contemporary literature, newspapers, letters, statements made by group leaders and opinion molders. After 1935 he uses the additional data provided by national polls on foreign affairs made by Dr. George Gallup, Elmo Roper, and the National Opinion Research Center. In fact he has studied the entire field of communications, and evaluates their contents as symptom and cause of public opinion.

The conclusions which Bailey arrives at are not palatable. His prognosis is not good. He presents a serious indictment of the American people and of the American Government as capricious, selfish, and ignorant blunders on the international scene. He places most of the blame on the American people, and he believes that the powerful influence of the man in the street constitutes a national danger. Many readers will disagree with this. "The man in the street does not know a star in the sky," is his flyleaf quotation from Emerson, and Bailey concludes that our average citizen knows even more about astronomy than about foreign affairs.

To support his theory that public opinion endangers national security, Mr. Bailey selects opinion and fact. He proposes an antidote to this danger. Let us, he suggests, endow the people with wisdom, and quotes F. C. Morehouse: "The problem of democracy is not the problem of getting rid of kings. It is the problem of clothing the whole people with the elements of kingship." He builds an admirable platform of pleasant fantasies, which—and we admit deep disappointment in the lack of constructive imagination of this excellent historian—it is apparent are not likely to be substantiated in the perceptible future. He

suggests that America attract the best brains into Government service, vote for the best men, those who have the broadest approach on foreign affairs, delegate responsibility to able public servants, educate people for citizenship and statesmanship, raise educational and apperceptive levels of our entire population, improve its textbooks, secure more critical teachers and a more critical public, develop more tolerance in international relations, be more objective, keep its head in crises, and half a dozen other desiderata the virtue of which nobody can deny. He makes every effort to maintain objective aloofness, and generally succeeds.

He takes up one after the other the leading characteristics of our foreign relations public opinion as he sees it, our firm but illogical loyalty to democracy, the hyphenates, manifest destiny, unguarded ramparts, capriciousness, dollars versus idealism, xenophobia, xenophilia, isolationism, the sucker tradition, sectionalism, apathy, free seas and open doors, propaganda and pressure groups, printing and airways, selfishness, politics in foreign affairs, ignorance, and other cogent attitudes. All these chapters are enriched with quotations so telling that they must arouse a good deal of envy in the heart of other writers. The quotations support his theses and they are fascinating *per se*.

Occasionally, however, his interpretations betray a chauvinism that is surprising in a scholar who categorically condemns national myths and xenophobia. He turns up his nose now and again at the ingredients of the American melting pot. Criticism of insularity might be leveled against his discussion of the hyphenated Americans who took so large a part in this country's history.

The chapter on polls should be read carefully by all who help direct public affairs. Our own studies verify the instability of individual opinions on such matters as foreign affairs and international relations. Polls are reliable only as a current index. For that reason it is important for our leaders to understand the background of polls, to use them as a guide, but not as commands. Our polls show, Bailey says, that our least-educated citizens are the most narrow-minded and short-sighted and that they are the most militaristic, possibly because they are the most insecure. He advocates with Lowe, "Now we must educate our masters." He thinks America cannot endure with nine-tenths ignorant and one-tenth informed.



—Sargent.

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Mr. Bailey's discussion of the short-sightedness and selfishness of pressure groups in public affairs is interesting. He ascribes our capriciousness in foreign affairs to ignorance. He accuses us of indifference when we should have been excited, and excitement when we should have been indifferent. He discusses our inferiority complex in our early history. He explains our conflicting emphases on idealism and dollars. He traces the myths and realities that have made us xenophiles and xenophobics. He explains by way of example that the Finnish loan was commercial, and was not a war debt, and yet our enthusiastic attitude toward the Finns was based on the general belief that they had paid a war debt. Despite our recurrent isolationism, which he ascribes to our geography, he proves that isolationism has never worked; between 1689 and 1945 we were unable to stay out of nine general, or what might be termed world, wars.

He deflates the Monroe Doctrine. Says it was merely words until we were strong enough to enforce it. Now it is no longer a unilateral doctrine but a multilateral one. We regret that more space was not devoted to his discussions of propaganda and pressure groups, and the printing press and airways. He sees the need for better training and higher standards in our journalism, of press and air. He believes that shortcomings are the fault of the public as well as of the media, which, because they are subject to a profit motive, must of necessity be affected by the public.

Edward L. Bernays is the author of "Crystallized Public Opinion," "Speak Up for Democracy," and other books on similar subjects.

**Belles-Lettres.** *What one might call the autobiographies of the spirit play a unique role in world literature. By-products often of more conventional artistic activity, such personal records as the "Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini" and John Bunyan's "Grace Abounding" unconsciously express the conflicts, the aspirations, the philosophy of the intellectual of the period. The Italian Renaissance overflows from the lusty pages of Cellini's story; in "Grace Abounding" the religious fervor of the seventeenth-century Protestant still shines at its purest. Two poles of thought in the America of the nineteenth century speak through Emerson's "Journals" and "The Education of Henry Adams." So for our own times we have, in "The Letters of T. E. Lawrence," for instance, and in André Gide's "Journals" and the "Diaries" of Franz Kafka, both discussed below, portraits of today's suffering, alienated intellectual.*

## Voice of Western Protestant Conscience

THE JOURNALS OF ANDRÉ GIDE.  
Volume II: 1914-1927. Translated from the French and Annotated by Justice O'Brien. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1948. 462 pp. \$6.

Reviewed by MAXWELL GEISMAR

THE FIRST volume of André Gide's "Journals" to be published in the United States covered the years from 1889 to 1913, and contained the record of Gide's youth and literary apprenticeship. The present volume continues the story from 1914 to 1927. The fascinating record of the French and European literary scene during this period is matched again by the story of Gide's literary development, his personal conflicts, and his domestic existence. A third volume of the "Journals," to be published before 1950, will complete the project.

Meanwhile the two volumes already available, brilliantly edited and handsomely printed, are surely an achievement in themselves. These "Journals" are remarkable and wonderful books to which no reviewer with a sense of perspective can hope to do justice. They were entered upon by Gide almost as a diversion, and carried forward as a form of literary discipline. But the "Journals" also became a source of salvation to Gide, or at least a method of preserving his sanity. They contain as much of the artist's heart and mind as we have any right to expect, and they will probably stand as his most complete and enduring work.

Perhaps indeed the "Journals"—informal in tone, irregular in context, a skilful and absorbing mixture of portraits and places, of drawing-room gossip and metaphysical speculation, of remarkable passages of literary criticism and moral scrutiny, of lyri-

cal outbursts and personal revelation—will be considered as the only books of Gide which completely represent him. For this is a very complex personality, full of scruples and modesty, tormented, evasive, and oblique, as well as singularly penetrating and sincere, and in the second volume of the "Journals" we see Gide playing at least four or five roles. He is the Parisian, or European, literary man, editor of the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, a powerful influence, friend of Paul Bourget, Jean Cocteau, Proust, Leon Blum, Walter Rathenau, and innumerable other celebrities. He is an established novelist, dramatist, poet and critic, translator of Conrad and Whitman and many other artists of his time, a classical scholar, a leader of the modernists.

But he is the solitary artist, too, distrustful of what he has achieved, conscious not only of having been misrepresented in the public eye but of having misrepresented himself, the prey of religious doubts, the victim of sensual impulses, the disturbed student as well as the acknowledged master of his craft. And how full these pages are of relapses and self-reproach, of prayers and promises, of illness and anxiety as well as of "the most abominable desires" and penances! Yet consider Gide's actual output during these years: "Lafcadio's Adventures," "Corydon," "If It Die . . ."

and "The Counterfeiters" among his other stories and plays, essays, introductions, translations, and lectures. He has been excoriating himself not for not doing enough, but for not doing more. Moreover, his sexual conflicts were as violent as ever at the age of fifty, and as painful. Cuverville, where Gide also played the role of country gentleman, and pruned the trees, and studied the birds, and entertained the neighbors, often seems like an estate of the damned.

Probably Gide still remains one of the last great voices of the Western European Protestant conscience. This is essentially a religious mind without a religious framework. Like Rilke, or Kafka, too, Gide is an almost classic example of the modern genius, that is to say, of excessive sensibility, of introspection and subjectivity, of talent that has been cut off from many of its natural sources and activities. One notices his disdain for politics, his final indifference to the First World War or the issues of the Peace, his belated and rather naive concern with the revolutionary social forces of his time, or of his own country. (In this sense, even the issue of homosexuality, to which Gide devoted such a large part of his career, and so much compassion, analytical force, and moral fervor, takes on an historical significance.) It may take another epoch of blood and tyranny before we again reach such flowering of individualism.

André Gide's historical moment may have passed. But his justification seems clear in the eyes of the God whom he finally placed as the object, and not the cause, of human progress. He accepted his final role, too, and he gave to it all his intensity, his marvelous curiosity, his power and humility. The tone of the "Journals" is often ironical or entertaining, sometimes theatrical, but that is the real story they tell, and that is why, probably before any other work of Gide's, they will become part of the historical record. Mr. O'Brien's translation seems to me, an outlander, a first-rate job.

Maxwell Geismar is the author of "The Last of the Provincials: The American Novel 1915-1925," the second in a series of such studies on the leading American novelists from the Civil War to the present time.

