

# A Century of Revolt

**MOVEMENTS OF THOUGHT IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.** By George H. Mead. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 1936. \$5.

Reviewed by GERTRUDE VERITY RICH

**I**N THE welter of thought characteristic of the 19th century can be found the immediate background of contemporary problems and attitudes. And yet there is no one tendency in terms of which that century can be interpreted. It saw no great intellectual synthesis; men were not united in their thought, they were diversified in their disagreements. The period is one of revolt, and of building in a number of new directions. Hence it is almost impossible to make any valid generalizations that will cover the century as a whole, or to interpret it from an exclusive point of view, whether economic, political, or scientific. An adequate appraisal must weave these varied threads into a real fabric. It is this which Professor George Mead does so richly in his "Movements of Thought in the Nineteenth Century."

The style in which the material is presented may at first seem a drawback. Professor Mead's death in 1931 saw his work uncompleted, but much of it had been left in the form of stenographic reports of his lectures.

The lectures follow three major lines of development: First, the transition from Renaissance to Revolution, with Kant as the philosopher of the Revolution and the great Idealists Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel representing the birth of Romanticism out of its breakdown. Second, the spread of the idea of evolution, fostered by the Hegelian philosophy and fostering in its turn the industrial revolution and the social doctrines of the Utilitarians and Karl Marx. Third, the social conditions out of which modern science arose, together with its characteristic method and the problems it raises for modern philosophy.

To introduce the thought of the century, Mead goes back into the Renaissance, particularly into Renaissance science. Here his interpretation would seem to be too predominantly theological, for he finds that the mathematical emphasis of Galileo and his fellow physicists was an attempt to explain in scientific terms the rational universe of the theologian with which they started, and that their assignment of a mental status to secondary qualities was largely made possible because of Christianity with its stress on the human soul. But Galileo was protesting against the Aristotelian qualitative rationalism of the theologian, he was not developing a scientific apologetic for it.

Thus the discussion of the early Renaissance seems biased, but in his treatment of the later philosophers, Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, and the society which each of these desired, Professor Mead presents a sound analysis. Particularly well drawn is the contrast between Hobbes and Locke, who put social impulses in man's nature and so could build up a society in terms less rigid than those

of Hobbes; and so too is the analysis of the *Volonté Générale* in Rousseau, that *Volonté Générale* which Mead sees developing into the Kantian categorical imperative.

We owe this volume a debt of gratitude for explaining Kant in terms understandable to those who do not specialize in his philosophy. Kant as the culmination of certain social attitudes, and as the apologist for that science which Hume's critique had so brilliantly attacked, is ably and succinctly presented, and his influence upon the Romanticists pointed out. The more abstruse statements of German Romantic Idealism are simplified and its bearing upon the interpretation of the self and the world, so significant for later individualism, are clearly stated.

Though the student of economics and sociology will be interested in the able analysis of the industrial revolution and the rise of capitalism as productive of Adam Smith, the Utilitarians, and Karl Marx, still it is in the author's emphasis upon the development of science that he can contribute most where it is most needed. Science as Newton saw it and as the modern research scientist sees it are two distinct things; and if one can make any generalization about the 19th century it is that it embodies the shift from a static conception of the universe to one in which geneticism is all important, and the dominant idea is that of process. The whole influence of science in this modern age, an influence due to the tremendous ability it gives man to control his environment; the fundamental presupposition that science makes as to the intelligibility of the world; the na-

ture of the scientific postulate, which is always hypothetical in character, and which always welcomes challenge; the influence of evolution and the sciences of biology and psychology, with their interesting blend of the theological and the deterministic, upon the physical sciences; and the breakdown of the rigid and mechanical doctrines in physics, a breakdown which Mead sees leading through such figures as Maxwell, Michelson and Morley and Fitzgerald to the statement of relativity itself,—all these are discussed at length, and with originality as well as accuracy.

After discussing the three philosophical attitudes of vitalism, realism, and pragmatism which grow out of scientific method, Mead turns in his last three chapters to the elaboration of some of his own ideas in the fields of sociology and psychology. He connects the whole evolutionary process with social organization as its most complex expression. The development of the self, taking place in society as the individual is able to communicate and to participate in common activities, is explained, thus making the development of mind a social evolution. The nature of reflective experience is analyzed in pragmatic terms.

With the appendix the book stands as a treatment of most of the major problems of the 19th century. The one considerable omission is the problem of religion. Though Mead has scattered references to the contrast between religious dogma and scientific ideals, and though he stresses the kinship between religious idealism and Marxianism, there is no comprehensive treatment of the religious developments in the period. But the keenness and originality of Mead's viewpoint, and the combination of simplicity, comprehensiveness, and independent thought, should give this volume an extremely wide appeal.



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by  
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## A BALANCED RATION FOR A WEEK'S READING

THE MAGIC MOUNTAIN. By Thomas Mann. Knopf.

VIVA MEXICO. By Charles M. Flandrau. Appleton-Century.

THE TESTAMENT OF BEAUTY. By Robert Bridges. Oxford University Press.

## Recreational Reading

"In September," writes L. S. R. of Jamestown, Pa., "I have a paper to prepare for a Study Club on recreational reading. I realize that a list of this kind would depend largely on one's personal tastes, and would like suggestions as to how to present such a list and what books are to be recommended."

RECREATION is, indeed, so much a matter of personal taste that to prescribe reading for the purpose is a matter of infinite perplexity. Anything may be recreation if it happens to fall in with the slant of mind of an individual, from an abstruse treatise on integral calculus to a cookbook. But, I suppose, what L. S. R. has specifically in mind is such books as are likely to divert a variety of persons under a variety of circumstances—the business man, the professional worker, the housewife, the invalid, anyone who either through enforced idleness or in brief intervals of relaxation seeks entertainment and amusement. I don't know how L. S. R. expects to handle her topic, whether it is to be disposed of in one meeting or whether it is to serve as subject for several, and I should think that just what she does with it would have to depend largely upon the time at her command. But if, as seems possible from her letter, she has to present a covering paper I should think her best way of attacking her subject would be to adjust it to her particular audience and offer such a list of reading as would fall in with the activities or interests of those who compose it. It's a fairly safe guess to suppose that the generality of persons turn for recreation in reading to fiction, biography, or history—especially to the first two categories. It's likely, too, that the person who is reading for recreation is spasmodic in his tastes, and that a list prepared for him need have little unity of theme. It's the person who is reading for a purpose who follows along definite lines, and who starting with a biography of Marie Antoinette would follow it up with a history of the French Revolution, and slide from that into a life of Napoleon and possibly to a SANFELICE. Your recreational reader will be content to read Marcia Davenport's MOZART (Scribners) and skip from that to Lytton Strachey's QUEEN VICTORIA (Harcourt, Brace), and from that, without turning a hair, to Don Marquis's ARCHY AND MEHITABEL (Doubleday, Doran).

For pure, unadulterated recreation, for the reading that is absorbing and completely removed from the suspicion of moral purpose, give me the detective story. Here are all the elements of diversion. A story which exerts in maturity the sort of fascination which the fairy story did in youth, which for most of us lies as completely outside the realm of our experience as did that other, in which we can vicariously live a life of danger and excitement and match our wits against the wits of the author as well as of his characters—here is true relaxation. Conan Doyle, Dorothy Sayers, Freeman Wills Crofts, Austin Freeman, Van Dine, Marjorie Allingham, and a host of other writers of the mystery story are names to place on L. S. R.'s list. And still, now that I have put them there, I am sorry that I did not begin with a far different type of reading, for after all what could be better recreation than rereading the classics of literature, the great works which yield fresh delight on every return to them? Only last month I employed some of the leisure hours of the first vacation from enforced reading that I have had in a long time in rereading (for the how manyeth time I cannot say), PRIDE AND PREJUDICE, EMMA, and PERSUASION, and I know of no better prescription for recreation. So perhaps L. S. R. should begin her paper by counselling her club to return to those works which have been loved in the past, dwell in memory fondly, and yield unexpected delight by the rediscovery of half-forgotten details. But, to come down to present days. There are the many volumes of which our friends are always talking with enthusiasm, the graceful stories or the humorous ones, or the charmingly sentimental, or the piquant, books all of us mean to read when they appear and under the stress of daily routine find no leisure for. They are excellent selections for the hours of relaxation—such books as "Elizabeth's" THE ENCHANTED APRIL (Doubleday, Doran), or Margaret Kennedy's THE CONSTANT NYMPH (Doubleday, Doran), or J. B. Priestley's THE GOOD COMPANIONS (Harpers), or any of Ellen Glasgow's novels (whose wit and penetration place them in the front rank of contemporary fiction), or some of Willa Cather's, or A. P. Herbert's THE WATER GYPSIES (Doubleday, Doran), or—But what's the use? The further I go the more involved I get, for any good book is good for recreational reading, and I feel as if I could go on almost at random naming novels by H. G. Wells, and Galsworthy, and Conrad, and Sigrid Undset's KRISTIN LAVRANDSATTER (Knopf), and George Croyne's THE POOL OF VENUS (Covici-Friede), and the just issued GONE WITH THE WIND (Macmillan), by Margaret Mitchell.

Of course for many a person there is no better recreational reading than travel. This is the true escape literature, for here, with the aid of imagination, one can be transported to realms of wonder, see a MAGIC ISLAND (Harcourt, Brace),

with W. B. Seabrook, walk again the streets of the Eternal City through the ROMAN PICTURES (Scribners) of Percy Lubbock, wander among the people of Jugo-Slavia in Louis Adamic's THE NATIVE'S RETURN (Harpers), or know the fascination of the South American wilderness through William Beebe's JUNGLE PEACE (Holt). A copy of Baedeker can be the most delightful recreational reading in the world, arousing it as it does memories of lands and places seen in the past, or gilding the lily of anticipation by its descriptions of as yet unvisited scenes. Every man to his taste. Those who love adventure can get it from such works as Fleming's BRAZILIAN ADVENTURE (Scribners), or Negley Farson's THE WAY OF A TRANSGRESSOR (Harcourt, Brace), or Vincent Sheean's PERSONAL HISTORY (Doubleday, Doran). Those who want more gentle experience can turn to such a record as the just published A LONG RETROSPECT (Oxford University Press), by F. Anstey, or one of the many other reminiscences of Victorian days.

Finally, L. S. R. will have no trouble in selecting from recent biographical studies any number that will appeal to her club—such books as Edith Sitwell's just published life of Queen Victoria (Houghton Mifflin), as Stefan Zweig's MARIE ANTOINETTE (Viking), Elswyth Thanes's THE YOUNG DISRAELI (Harcourt, Brace), which is nearer biography than the fiction it ostensibly is, or, to turn to a different sort of memoir, Edith Wharton's A BACKWARD GLANCE (Appleton-Century), Margaret Winthrop Chanler's ROMAN SPRING (Little, Brown), or Anne Morrow Lindbergh's NORTH TO THE ORIENT (Harcourt, Brace).

But, as I said before, what's the use? Anything is recreational reading. I can imagine a worse fate than to be left with the Countess Morphy's RECIPES OF ALL NATIONS (Wise) or Fowler's HANDBOOK OF ENGLISH USAGE (Oxford University Press). In fact I can't think of any happier volume to which one could turn for recreational reading than the last-named work of scholarship.

## Municipal Government

E. H. T. of North Tonawanda, N. Y., wants a list of several books on municipal government, including one, if possible, on New York State specifically.

AMERICAN CITY GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION (Crowell), by Austin F. Macdonald, covers all aspects of municipal government, but throws its emphasis specially on legal and administrative phases. In his GOVERNMENT OF AMERICAN CITIES (Macmillan), on the other hand, William Bennett Munro virtually ignores the administrative side, which, however, he treats at length in his MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION (Macmillan). The most promising book for E. H. T.'s purposes that I find having bearing particularly on municipal government in New York State is WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH NEW YORK? (Macmillan). It is the city, of course, with which Norman M. Thomas, Socialist candidate for President, and Paul Blanshard are concerned, but E. H. T. will surely want to read in detail of the workings, and failure to work, of the government of this greatest of the state's cities.