

## Albert Schweitzer

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rior against the "marching ants"; the world of the peasant-farmer and that of the man of whom it is written that "of all his accomplishments, planting fruit trees was the one which gave him the greatest pleasure." The world of resignation and suffering; and the world of life affirmation. The world of a decadent and dying Western civilization, from which he came; and the world of a race of freedom-loving, dignified Africans, who refused to bend to the ways and fashions of the Western man—except to degrade themselves with the Occident's alcohol and tobacco. And last, but far from least, there are Schweitzer's worlds of animistic nature-love, of his almost mystical "Reverence for Life," and of ethical dedication. Every one of these worlds somehow seems always to be present, each in turn yielding to the peculiar priority-claims of the particular moment and occasion. "The Many Worlds of Albert Schweitzer" would have been a more truly descriptive title, therefore. For all these worlds are depicted

with a fine sense of balance, and are yet interwoven in a constantly changing panorama of varying patterns—in such a way that the final outcome constitutes a magnificent portrait of gigantic proportions, in which the artist has not permitted his sense of unity to obliterate the kaleidoscopic variety, and even contradictions. All in all "a man whose essential simplicity was overlaid with furious complexities."

**E**VEN as concerns the focal point of Schweitzer's philosophy of life, his famous doctrine of "Reverence for Life," I do not believe that I have seen anywhere a more pointed explanation or a more tersely stated implied criticism than Mr. Payne's declaration:

When he spoke of the sanctity of life—of all life—the philosopher was putting into philosophical terms the ancient animistic belief he has inherited from his ancestors.

Or when the author reduces "the hard core of Schweitzer's thought" to this:

*His mission was nothing less than*

*to revive by his writing and by his example the lost purposes of western civilization. . . . He failed because Western civilization was too far advanced in its unalterable progress, and even the most powerful witch-doctor could not conjure the proper spells to put an end to madness. . . .*

No, not even to the madness of taking chances with all future human generations—as has been demonstrated only this year, when Schweitzer raised his voice against further testing of atomic and hydrogen weapons of mass-destruction!

Schweitzer's cry of March 22, 1932, in his commemorative address on the occasion of Goethe's centennial death-anniversary in Frankfurt-on-the-Main, is as applicable in 1957 as it was then:

Remain human with your own soul. . . . If you surrender the ideal of human personality, then spiritual man is ruined, and with the end of spiritual man comes the end of civilization, yes, indeed, the end of humanity!

This is a work of biographical magnitude which belies the slightness of



**ITCHING FOOT:** Last week Robert Payne published a book on Albert Schweitzer (see p. 23). Later this month Funk & Wagnalls will be bringing out his account of pre-Bolshevik revolutionaries "The Terrorists." Next

month Knopf will publish his history of an ancient civilization "The Splendor of Persia." Three books in a single season would be an extraordinary feat for any writer, but not for Pierre Stephen Robert Payne. He's been doing it for years, and now, according to his hazy recollection, has "fifty-odd" on his bibliography, with almost as many publishers. His works include poetry ("The Rose Tree"), theology ("The Fathers of the Western Church"), historical romance ("Blood Royal"), and reportage ("Revolt in Asia"). Usually he signs his own name to his books, sometimes he uses pseudonyms (Richard Cargoe, Howard Horne, Robert Young, Valentin Tikhonov, et al.).

He denies that he is especially prolific: "I just keep at it, sometimes only a page or two a day." Nor does he think that his subjects are unduly varied: "Almost all of my books spring from

my interest in the marriage of Eastern and Western cultures."

It's his itching foot that has carried Payne through so many volumes and topics. Born in Cornwall of a family of shipwrights, he early headed for South Africa where he studied mathematics, did graduate work in languages (only Polish stumped him), rolled on to the Sorbonne and Munich (where he enlisted in an abortive attempt to assassinate Hitler), got involved in the Spanish Civil War. Hoping to find peace in the East, he popped up next in Singapore, Bali, and Java, taught English and naval architecture at the University in Kunming, China. By 1946 he had tired of the New China and, after a stopover in India, arrived in the USA, where he's been living, off and on, ever since. Most of the places he's visited turn up, sooner or later, in his books.

In the USA Mr. Payne has sought no rest and found none. For a time he taught "enormously Southern girls" at an Alabama college, directed documentary films, and always, steadily, has been writing books. He works at night, every night. Short, wiry, and youthful beyond his forty-six years, he doesn't look the worse for it. "I get to work at midnight and keep at it until dawn," he explains. "I can't stand daytime noises and interruptions." Never stationary long enough to have a home or an apartment of his own,

he usually lives, waist-high in source books for his current project, in a rented furnished room. Although he knows that he could use a bestseller (his books sell, on the average, 7,000 copies), he doesn't lose time brooding over royalty statements. Is he a compulsive writer? "Oh, yes," he admits cheerfully, "but only for eight months of the year—the rest of the time I travel."

**L**AST year he toured Schweitzer's Alsatian countryside. He visited all of Schweitzer's haunts, read everything available, but determinedly kept away from Lambaréné. His meetings with Chaplin, Mao Tse-Tung, General Marshall, earlier subjects, have convinced him that for a biographer "knowing them in the flesh is not entirely a blessing: affection, hostility, respect for a physical presence, the creeping paralysis which comes over the observer when he sees or thinks he sees the great man revealing unsuspected depths of character—all these things get in the way."

Soon Mr. Payne will be leaving New York for more exotic climates: perhaps Mexico, perhaps Portugal, perhaps the Azores. As for future book ideas, he has a few: a biography of the mathematician Gaulois, a travel book on Italy, a history of the cameraman. And, oh yes, a book about angels.

—ROLLENE WATERMAN.

its appearance, and which deserves to be read by every literate modern.

**ONCE OVER LIGHTLY:** "Albert Schweitzer: The Story of His Life," by Jean Pierhal (Philosophical Library, \$3), is a translated and greatly abbreviated version of a 1955 German work. Although the original edition added nothing significantly new to the already existing Schweitzer lore, it was a very readable and reasonably accurate book, telling the story of Schweitzer's life from his immediate ancestry and birth in 1875 to his eightieth birthday. The English version is at best easy-chair reading for persons seeking a first quick glimpse of Albert Schweitzer. At worst there are many points where this translation compares poorly with the German original. —P. A. S.

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