An able preface sets forth Dr. Coues' reasons for his reprinting of Biddle's text. Prefatory articles of great value also are Jefferson's Memoir of Meriwether Lewis and Coues' Memoirs of William Clark and of Patrick Gass, a sergeant who accompanied the expedition and who published his own journal. The Bibliographical Introduction by Coues is practically a definitive piece of work encompassing all Lewis and Clark material until 1892. It does not, of course, include Reuben Gold Thwaites' monumental eight volume edition of the full Original Journals and orderly books with full scientific data and the journals of two of the sergeants (published 1904, reprinted 1959), annotated but not copiously.

Eight maps are distributed through the three volumes. Those folded inside the back cover of volume II merit first mention in that one is a reproduction of the map sent by Captain Meriwether Lewis to President Jefferson from the first winter encampment at Fort Mandan (later North Dakota). The other is that prepared by Captain William Clark to accompany the 1814 edition of the History. Inside the back cover of volume I is folded a modern map (1893) prepared by Dr. Coues to an accurate scale better to identify the route of the expedition with place names recognizable to this day (1966). Five other maps appearing at the end of volume III were selected by the editor as most worthy of reproduction, representing the falls and rapids of the Missouri and Columbia Rivers and one of Indian fortifications.

The more particular reader may wish to study the full journals, but he cannot fail to be thrilled by the narrative achieved by Nicholas Biddle and vitalized by Elliott Coues' footnotes that illuminate the pathway blazed across the plains, rivers and mountains of an untamed continent.

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This book, in common with many other important writings of the current period of history, raises more questions than it answers. It represents a modern way of discussing men and events. Whether that
pattern can be considered approximately final or even reasonably effective or desirable is, of course, unsettled. The publisher believes it to be a "deeply significant work" and contends that the author has "given life to the stony image of George Washington which stares at us so impersonally from Mount Rushmore."

If this judgment be correct, James Thomas Flexner may have met the requirement suggested by Colonel Robert Ingersoll roughly a century ago when he said: "Washington is now only a steel engraving. About the real man who lived and loved and hated and schemed, we know but little."

But it must be remembered that this volume is only one of thousands published since 1799. The number of biographies of Washington increases daily. In the bicentennial year 1932 it was estimated that more than half a million tributes to him were produced in more than a hundred nations and in more than fifty languages. Naturally the vast majority of those literary endeavors followed the models provided by his contemporaries who denominated him The Father of His Country. That premier title was bulwarked by Colonel Henry (Light-Horse Harry) Lee with the definitive words: "A citizen, first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen." It was ratified in 1842 by Abraham Lincoln with the unqualified pronouncement: "Washington is the mightiest name of earth." Against the background of such authoritative decisions what is written about Washington as late as 1965 obviously can be little if anything more than mere repetition.

It does not follow, however, that such efforts as Mr. Flexner's are utterly useless. No biographer this side of 1832 could claim to have had the advantage of personal knowledge of the subject. Every book about Washington depends upon hearsay, even when it is dedicated to what has been called "debunking."

Yet the instinct to reappraise our heroes is not deplorable. As long as they are not libelous for some perverse purpose, it is normal procedure to consider them anew and in the light of recently developed ideas. Mr. Flexner worked under the influence of many contemporary theorists, including those who are professional "mind-changers." He accepts at the very start of his labors the notions of Sigmund Freud, including some which backfired upon Freud himself as well as upon his disciples.

It is Mr. Flexner's opinion that Washington was a "somewhat repellent 'marble image'" to "the nation which to so great an extent owes to him its birth," and it is his intention to retell the story of "the
true George Washington" — "one of the noblest and greatest men who ever lived." Thus he traveled much the same road and arrived at much the same destination as Rupert Hughes, W. E. Woodward and even Bernhard Knollenberg. He wants Washington to be known and appreciated as a human being. So he believes him to have been in love with another man's wife, fond of gambling, capable of smuggling, greedy for land, critical of his mother, sometimes sharp with creditors, ambitious, "sympathetic with sinners, for he was not himself immune to temptations, nor did he always behave as his conscience would have liked him to do."

Let it be repeated that there is nothing shockingly new about these complaints. Mr. Flexner at the end of his script concedes: "There is something pitiful in the hero, as he rides away to immortality," but he does not tell his readers what that "something pitiful" was. The reason, it seems, is that he does not know. Washington still is a mystery, just as Jesus and Buddha, Lao-tse and Confucius, Mohammed and the other mighty ones "in moral reformation" were. It is possible to be dogmatic about him only as it is possible to be dogmatic about Shakespeare and Beethoven, Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci.

Perhaps it would have helped Mr. Flexner if he had made better use of William Alfred Bryan's George Washington in American Literature, 1775-1865, published in 1952. Also, scholars interested in biographies of Washington should know about a constructive study submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Pittsburgh for the degree of Master of Arts in 1929. The author is the Reverend Isaac Noble Dundore, presently a Lutheran minister at Brownsville, Pennsylvania.

The Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania

James Waldo Fawcett


It has long been thought by the reviewer that the best training for historiography is prior specialization in English. Dr. Wallace, "for