

# Kindness To An Elderly Santayana

SANTAYANA, THE LATER YEARS, by Daniel Cory; Braziller; \$7.50.

Santayana's autobiographies offer us a clear and memorable chronicle of his life from the pre Harvard period to the final drafts of *The Last Puritan*. We recall vividly that somewhat pale and wanning undergraduate who "audaciously neglected" his Latin studies, frequently jostled with William James, and continually dreamed of leading the romantic life of a wandering student.

We know of the young instructor with fashionable beard, lecturing on Berkeley and Hume, who left Harvard

in the middle of a sentence—his only farewell that final, glorious fragment.

Cory's book presents an equally graphic account of the elderly Santayana. We see him strolling the Roman piazzas, and, overhear his reflections of beauty, pictorial experience, and St. John of the Cross.

Cory's epistolary portrait begins in 1927, when, as an American student abroad, he first met Santayana and began, as he says, "the intellectual romance of my life." The book covers the following 25 year period, during which time the friends were frequently together in Rome,

Florence, Paris and London, and continually wrote to each other. Only during the war years does communication cease, due to mail restrictions imposed by the Italian government.

Many literary notables are mentioned throughout the book. There are T. S. Eliot and Walter Lippman, both former students of Santayana. There is Ezra Pound, who at the time was swinging his cane in castigation of practically everyone. It is curious to see Pound so uncharacteristically taciturn and humble in the presence of the Master. And there is Robert Lowell, whose precise couplets impressed Santayana so much.

Cory writes well, and throughout most of the book his genuine reverence for his friend is evident. The reader may consider his behavior toward Santayana during the early years of their friendship somewhat irksome. There is occasionally a certain abruptness and impropriety in his manner. But there is always Santayana, nodding sagely and tolerating with a sincere smile the whims and humors of a friend 40 years his junior.

Cory's description of Santayana's last days is a thing of beauty. Bed ridden and in extreme pain, the Master was overjoyed to see his friend that last afternoon, and, when asked if he were suffering, whispered: "Yes, my friend. But my anguish is entirely physical; there are no moral difficulties whatsoever."

—George Kirazian Jr.