

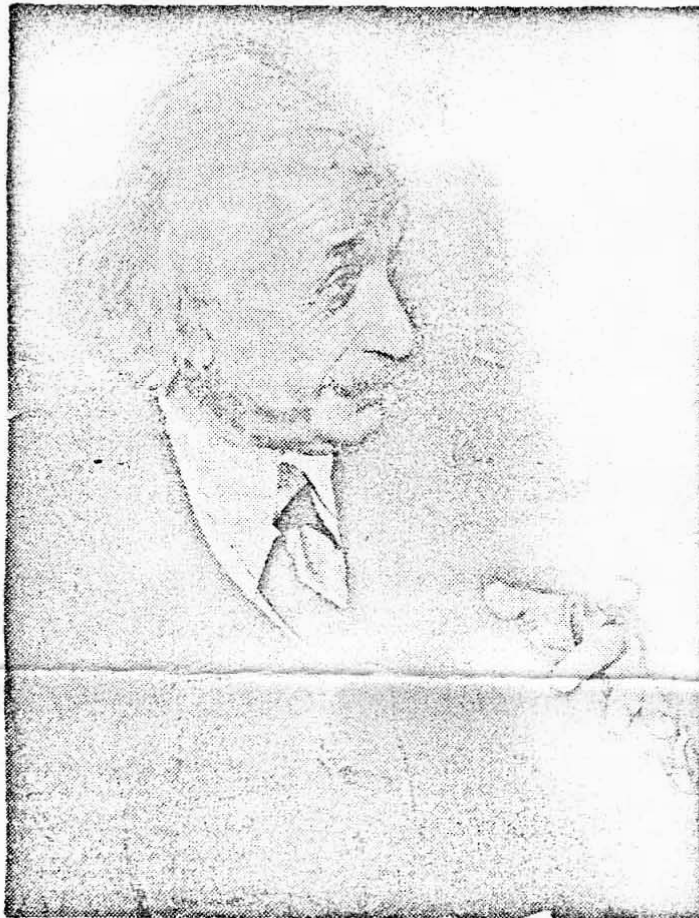
Captivating for All

EINSTEIN: LIFE AND TIMES. By Ronald W. Clark, 718 pp. New York: The World Publishing Co. \$15.

Albert Einstein, symbol of an era and of the triumphant as well as tragic age of physics, offers unlimited possibilities to any biographer. Ronald W. Clark, distinguished British historian, in his volume on Einstein and his life and times, appears adequately prepared for this multidimensional task. Philipp Frank, Einstein's successor at Prague University, wrote an excellent biography under the same title during Einstein's lifetime. Ronald Clark unfolds for the reader an overwhelming panorama of the heroic life of an intellectual giant of our time, that will continue to radiate as a solitary beacon centuries after all recent politicians and generals vanish in the dustbin of history.

Clark's Einstein is not merely a portrait of his private life, it is the majestic vista of the first half of the twentieth century. It is the feverish rise of the scientific age under the impact of Einsteinian ideas, darkened by two world wars, in which to Einstein's dismay and reluctant influence science became ever more a handmaiden of destruction. A quixotic pacifist, Einstein never dreamed that his famous equation published in 1905, on the equivalence of energy and the product of mass and the square of velocity of light, would reach its technical application in his lifetime as it did on August 6, 1945 in the tragedy of Hiroshima, the zero date of the nuclear age.

During the nationalistic parades at "Unter den Linden" in his Berlin years,



Albert Einstein

Prussian goosestepping, now inherited by Soviet militarists, inspired Einstein's aversion to militarism, his irreverence to any authority as he observed the rise of Naziism, and he commented frankly: "Anyone who can take pleasure in marching in formation to the strains of a band is once and for all an object of contempt to me; his brain has been given to him by mistake, a backbone was all he needed." Yet this controversial and fearless genius, who could express himself comfortably only in German, the language of his despised

compatriots, twice renounced his German citizenship. He abandoned his pacifism when the German Nobel physicist, C. F. von Weizsacker, worked for Hitler. Einstein then wrote his famous letter to President Roosevelt, encouraging America to go forward in atomic weapons research which eventually brought about the disaster of Hiroshima which Einstein condemned. Nevertheless, his aversion toward secrecy in science kept Einstein out of the war secrets of the Manhattan Project.

In his devotion to the quest

of relativistic physics with the awesome riddle of a four dimensional universe, Einstein abandoned much of life with a monastic passion, only to be thrust back into the limelight of recurrent publicity by three world shaking developments: the rise of Nazi Germany the birth of nuclear weapons, and the creation of Israel. In each he had his lion's share, always being recklessly controversial. In his fame he could afford to be different. Though insufficiently religious in his Jewishness, he continued to believe in God, One who does not play dice with the world. The latter stemmed from his obstinate adherence to the deterministic universe of Newton which he helped to dismantle with his genial formalization of photoelectricity, which alone secured for him a Nobel prize in physics. Einstein could never accommodate himself to Heisenberg's principle of indeterminacy and Quantum Mechanics, and in his latter years found himself overtaken by his young colleagues to his joy in happy solitude.

I recall vividly every moment I fortunately spent in his simple frame house in Princeton. He had two pictures in his study, that of the theoretical physicist, J. C. Maxwell, and of Mahatma Gandhi Einstein's ideal man, with potentialities to solve world problems. The magnificent volume of Ronald Clark should captivate all, from layman to the physicist. Each chapter enjoyed either independently or as part of a life which Einstein's two close friends, Henri Bergson and Romain Rolland, would describe as one great 'solitary upsurge,' a climax of man's search since the beginning of the Renaissance.

—KAREL HUJER