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Review of  
"The Life and Works of Andrew Sloan Draper"

By HARLAN HOYT HORNER

REVIEWED BY A. R. BRUBACHER OF THE NEW YORK STATE COLLEGE FOR TEACHERS.

THE outstanding fact in *The Life and Works of Andrew Sloan Draper* by Harlan Hoyt Horner is that the biographer has by this single effort achieved greatness among the biographers of all time. There are passages that suggest Plutarch, chapters that recall Boswell. But there is little or nothing to suggest the presumptions of the psychologist-biographer of recent years. The biographer knew his subject and needed not to conjecture the man by psychoanalyzing hearsay evidence. How discriminating this knowledge is, is well demonstrated by the last chapter, "Man and Citizen," more especially by the exquisite thumb nail sketch in the following passage:

"there looms up first of all simply the image of a man, foursquare, resourceful, determined, wholesome, sane. The peculiar power of his personality, and the moving moral force that he was, outrank his accomplishments. The man was greater than his works."

Any one who had come into the presence of Andrew S. Draper, or had felt directly the power of the man in public address, will on reading this chapter, instantly have reconstructed for himself the vivid, commanding person of the great Commissioner.

It is a rare gift in a biographer to marshal the facts of a man's life in such a way that the man and person live again for the reader. Dr. Horner's chapters are accurate, complete, symmetrical, suggesting the mathematically exact facets of a cut diamond. This is accomplished in part by letting Draper's life details speak for themselves, in part by throwing the judgments of other strong men like spotlights on the Draper character. Here is the judgment of one who had opposed him for the state superintendency: "I thought the state made a blunder." After six years he was ready to say of his successful opponent:

"He is a man without guile. He never plans in secret and sneaks around to accomplish his purpose. If you want to know his views, ask him. He will tell you. He has no purpose that is not manly. He has never attempted to accomplish anything by legislative methods, or any other, that is not above board."

Many quotations could be made from the book to add definiteness to the remarkable portrait drawn by Dr. Horner. Perhaps one more, a brief line by the author, will complete the picture at a single stroke: "Dr. Draper never got in a hurry when he wrestled with an idea." That is proof of the artist. To stand again before this pen portrait of the great Draper makes us all want to live better professional lives.

There is only one instance in which the biographer finds it necessary to defend his subject. He is quick to draw against the implication by a historian of the University of Illinois, that Dr. Draper had misconceived the future and consequently had given wrong advice to his successor in the presidency. It was hardly necessary to defend him but if it were, the defense is adequate and effectively made. "The splendid subsequent administration of President James needs no defense and shines no brighter by implied disparagement of his predecessor." Well said.

The biography is a surprisingly complete résumé of the history of New York State education. Dr. Draper touched that history at many important points, as member of a city school board, as state superintendent of schools, as member and later as chairman of the board of trustees of the Albany Normal College, as commissioner of education. How he influenced the course of events between 1886 and 1913 is evidenced by the list of addresses in Appendix A and the remarkable list of educational laws in Appendix B. His service as state superintendent of public instruction re-

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lated him directly to Gideon Hawley and the origins of the free schools, while his last years in the commissionership related him to the whole range of history from 1787 down to date.

Dr. Draper was by general consent the great administrator. His biographer gives us several instances when this quality was especially in evidence. There was the dramatic moment when the chastened Board of Regents first met the new Commissioner of Education who had been legislated into that office without consent of the Regents. It was a great moment when failure would have been tragic. Dr. Draper rose equal to the opportunity. His brief statement of policy is a classic utterance on the relationship between a board and its executive officer. Every executive, every board member should read and observe. The pregnant sentences will remain to bless every board room: "Bodies legislate, individuals execute. We shall invite failure if we confuse legislative and executive functions."

It would be pleasant indeed to quote extensively from the biography. The reviewer must be indulged for two more brief statements from the text: President Butler said of him: "Dr. Draper could always be convinced, but he could not be frightened and he could not be bribed by either compliment or preferment." This is preeminently true and is fully corroborated by many incidents in this volume.

The measure of the man is well shown by an early incident in his professional life. He had been a lawyer, an assemblyman, a political leader, a judge of the

Court of Alabama Claims. From this political career he vaulted instantly into the professional field as superintendent of public instruction. Was this sleight of hand? Or was it political maneuvering? Dr. Draper made no mystery of it. Dr. Horner admits that "the office did not seek the man." The position was vacant and "looked attractive to Mr. Draper, now in his thirty-eighth year." In the words of Dr. Draper himself, "So I went about getting it. It did not come unexpectedly and was not urged upon me. I started a canvass for it. The response was quicker and stronger than I expected. Of course there was opposition." "In the caucus there were 98 votes. On the first ballot I had 41, on the second 44, on the third, 48, and on the fourth 61, and was nominated. The subsequent election was only a formality." Thus spoke the political leader. But his conversion to professional life was prompt and complete. Editor Bardeen had lamented in 1886 that the office of superintendent of public instruction had fallen into the hands of a politician; but in 1892 he recognized Draper "as the foremost educational statesman of America."

Dr. Horner had a great subject and the result is a really excellent biography. It is quite evident that the book was a labor of love. Andrew Sloan Draper was his ideal "man and citizen" but also his ideal executive. To him he gave loyal service in several professional capacities, and by this book he has enshrined him in the hearts of all who read it, for to read this biography is to admire and love Andrew Sloan Draper.

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*Loyalty to the worthy ideals of yesterday, and solicitude for the good of tomorrow compel the deepest concern, the most serious thought and the wisest procedure toward the education of our youth today. No depression is so deep, no catastrophe so serious and no emergency so important as to justify continued laxity in serious attention to education. For, to fail with the young, for whatever cause, is complete and final failure.—Quoted from "School and Community."*