

During the time he spent in his native Hawkeye state, E. B. Gaston became intrigued with several of the reform panaceas of the day. As his grandson writes, "Gaston and his associates read and learned from [Edward] Bellamy, [Henry] George, [Laurence] Gronlund, and others, drawing inspiration and insight from all of them, all the while choosing freely what suited them best" (33). But it was Henry George's single-tax notion that held the strongest appeal. Gaston and a group of Des Moines uplifters liked George's "individualist route to the cooperative commonwealth" (67), and that surely explains why Fairhope prospered.

Man and Mission is a nicely crafted work. It is gracefully written, well researched, and thoughtfully organized. It is useful to learn more about minor reformers and "crackpots" of the late nineteenth century. In this case Gaston was a toiler about whom little has been written. Author Gaston places his grandfather in the proper historical context, and he does not unduly glorify him. Yet Gaston, the grandson, assumes that the nation badly needed a major housecleaning. Like his grandfather, Gaston believes that businessmen were generally greedy and not interested in serving a public interest. Railroad titans, in particular, were considered to be bad citizens. But the historical literature on these individuals does not suggest that interpretation. They were builders, not destroyers. Even Jay Gould, "the most hated man in America," was hardly an evil businessman. Gaston would have surely benefited by considering the conclusions recently reached by Maury Klein in his superb biography of Gould. But the "robber baron" nonsense refuses to die, notwithstanding the works of such scholars as Klein, Thomas Cochran, Albro Martin, and Richard C. Overton.

From Prairie to Prison: The Life of Social Activist Kate Richards O'Hare, by Sally M. Miller. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993. Missouri Biography Series. xv, 252 pp. Illustration, bibliographical essay, index. \$29.95 cloth.

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In the early 1900s Kate Richards O'Hare was among the most popular orators and journalists of the thriving midwestern socialists. Although a variety of scholars have told of this larger movement, attention to O'Hare has been limited. In *Prairie to Prison*, Sally M. Miller has given us the first book-length study of the life of this significant woman.

Born in rural Kansas in 1876, O'Hare always traced the roots of her activism to her personal knowledge of the problems farmers faced

in an industrializing nation. When her father was forced to sell the family farm, she worked in a machine shop in Kansas City, Kansas, where she was exposed to socialism. In 1901 she went to Girard, where she attended school, worked on Julius Wayland's *Appeal to Reason*, and met and married Frank O'Hare, who, like her, was an activist and journalist. The O'Hares traveled widely, seeking to establish socialism in Oklahoma Territory, and eventually settling with their family in St. Louis. But for most of her life, Kate Richards O'Hare was on the road as a lecturer, especially in the plains states. During World War I, she was imprisoned along with other antiwar protesters in the Missouri state prison, emerging to engage in prison reform and other postwar movements.

Despite a dearth of existing private writing by O'Hare, Miller has written an engaging and accessible narrative of her subject's life, the places where she lived and worked, and the movements that consumed her energies. In doing so, she has established O'Hare as a socialist reformer who sought to improve people's lives immediately, rather than as a visionary radical. More significantly, Miller has addressed O'Hare's life as a woman, a wife, and a mother who left her family behind while she was on the lecture circuit. According to Miller, she seldom addressed the needs of women generally, nor did she seek close woman friends. Unlike other women activists of her day, O'Hare functioned in the traditionally male world of socialist politics as an outsider, an exceptional woman functioning with men. Her support for woman suffrage involved her with women outside the socialist movement, but it was never a major cause for her. The time she spent in the women's prison softened O'Hare, but never totally destroyed her sense of distance from other women.

Miller has drawn a believable image of O'Hare by tracing the persona she presented in her journalism and published speeches. However, a lack of citations to specific sources makes it impossible to know where Miller obtained her information and difficult to evaluate her scholarship. *From Prairie to Prison* is further weakened by Miller's tendency to blend her own voice with O'Hare's public persona and her other sources. An almost fictional tone to Miller's writing adds to the confusion. It is hard to distinguish O'Hare's interpretations from Miller's. Identifying her own voice more carefully might have allowed Miller to expand her own insights on her subject and to discuss more clearly the gaps between O'Hare's rhetoric and her life.

From Prairie to Prison introduces Kate Richards O'Hare to new readers and provides a full account of her life for readers who know something of her specific activities. A definitive account of O'Hare's life, however, remains to be written.

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