

liminary questions the attorney for the defense went on: "You were educated at Oxford?" "I was." "You went there as a Rhodes scholar?" "Yes."

Soon afterward I heard that the former three-quarter back had become an eminent K. C. in England. Cecil Rhodes meanwhile was sleeping peacefully on the hill called the View of the World in Africa. Yet his shadow cast itself across the lives of these two young men who went such different ways.

Rhodes was wildly hated and wildly loved. To old President Kruger he was "Apollyon, a financier, and the foul fiend himself". Yet Alfred Beit, a Jew from Hamburg and the shrewdest financier of his time in South Africa, spent himself in the service of the British imperialist. Those who hated Rhodes could not stop him any more than they could stop a charging elephant. Everything about the man was large, as his biographer points out. He had enormous virtues and enormous faults. He was one of those forceful men who must find outlet for their energy in great projects. With all his material success he was often pathetic. Material success alone could not satisfy him. He brooded on the universe and sought a meaning. In the silence of African nights he probed for some satisfying philosophy. There were moments when what he saw inclined him to believe that there was no meaning in things; the rain fell alike upon the just and the unjust, and perhaps man's birth was as insignificant as his death.

From this conclusion, however, Rhodes turned aside shudderingly. He could not stomach it. It is interesting to note that he was influenced by Winwood Reade's book "The Martyrdom of Man", in which the brilliant

author, after examining into man's history and the history of all religions, counseled his readers to forget their dreams of immortality as vain. Rhodes seized on the positive side of this philosophy. He deduced from it the necessity of improving conditions on this planet. He had to believe in something, and he took for his gods the British Empire, Queen Victoria, and the Anglo-Saxon race. The program which he drew up for the extension of British rule throughout the world has been practically all accomplished with one important exception, "the ultimate recovery of the United States as an integral part of the British Empire".

Mr. Williams, by painting in shadows as well as high lights, has produced a good biography.

Cecil Rhodes. By Basil Williams. Henry Holt and Co.

A BRITISH SPOON RIVER

By Charles Hanson Towne

IF a young journalist were starting out on his career, his managing editor could do him no greater service than to put this volume into his hands and say, "When you can write like this, you will know you have arrived." For succinctness, a stripping-to-the-bone effect, a naked, stark style, the book has few equals. I can think of only one writer who achieves such instant pictures, who so fearlessly shows up the foibles and weaknesses of poor human beings. I mean Edgar Lee Masters. This is a veritable "Spoon River" of living dead men—a sharp, incisive, truth-compelling set of portraits that bare men's souls, and cause the reader to suffer vicariously at the pitiless revelations.

Who wrote it? That is what everyone has been asking these many weeks; and the answer is yet to come. "A Gentleman with a Duster" has simply tried to rub off some of the grime from those mirrors of Downing Street; and in these days of labor troubles he has done a fine job. I should call him a servant of the public who had the welfare of his master at heart. He has not glossed things over. One gets a close-up of every man, from Lloyd George to Lord Leverhulme; and just as in the movies the veins of the most beautiful eyes are so magnified that they look like maps of the Himalayas, so here the faults and frailties of these men, however they may have tried to conceal them by clever make-up, are revealed for all to see.

It has been the present reviewer's fortune to see and talk to four of the baker's dozen thus analyzed and dissected. He knows, therefore, how vivid is the pen picture of Lloyd George—that massive lion's head on the dwarfish body, tapering down to legs that are hardly legs at all; that light in the eyes, that twinkle which means so much—or so little—as the Prime Minister desires. And he knows the Peter Pan appearance of Northcliffe, the stateliness of Balfour (the coldness, too) and the ruddy, sound-apple face of the late Lord Fisher.

Has Lloyd George read what is said of him in this book? Let him do so, and be a changed man ever after. He is literally torn to bits by the claws of a few hundred words; yet the anonymous writer is just when he wishes to be. He sums George up scathingly in this flashing sentence: "His conduct

in the last months of the war and during the election of 1918 was not only unworthy of his position but marked him definitely as a small man. He won the election, but he lost the world."

Of Lord Fisher, for whom he had an easily discerned admiration, he writes of those perilous days when Mr. Churchill hesitated in a crisis. "What does it matter," he reports Lord Fisher as saying, "whom you offend?—the fate of England depends on you. Does it matter if they shoot you, or hang you, or send you to the Tower, so long as England is saved?" And one inevitably thinks of Kipling's noble line, written in the early days of the war, "Who dies, if England live?"

For Lord Haldane the author has a deep sympathy; and those difficult hours when he was accused of pro-Germanism are spoken of with tenderness, and the story of the sure vindication of a truly great man is told with fire and fervor. He wishes that Haldane had not accepted his martyrdom with such unearthly poise. To the younger men of his time, he seemed lacking in the humanities—a man who could thus brush away his bitterest accusers. But now, with some perspective, the world can see how wise Haldane was to keep his temper, and not allow his vilifiers, in colloquial English, to "get his goat".

No more amazing volume has come to my desk in many months. It will rest on the shelves of our public libraries, and in our homes, when other books of our time are discarded and forgotten. A memorable piece of work; a daring exposé of men who are worth exposing.

The Mirrors of Downing Street. By A Gentleman with a Duster. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

RECENT BOOKS IN BRIEF REVIEW

HALL CAINE has done it again. His latest novel "The Master of Man" (Lippincott) still deals with (we have the publisher's word for it) "the eternal forces of life". The scene is laid in the Isle of Man and the story concerns the temporary ignoble passion of the son of the great man of the island, its tragic consequences, and true love faithful in disaster. The plot is complicated and worked out with considerable skill. The characters are all puppets and there is nauseating talk of sin-stained men and pure women. The logic and morality is puerile, while crude instincts are patently pandered to. In fact the whole book is all the more to be regretted for being so readably written.

At the age of twenty-one Henry James began his career as a book reviewer, and some of his anonymous book reviews, never heretofore printed in book form, are now collected in "Notes and Reviews" (Dunster House). A good deal of the subject-matter has proved hopelessly ephemeral, though some good material fell to his hand: novels by Hugo, George Eliot, Trollope, and Mrs. Gaskell. Trollope, despite the author's sneaking fancy for him, irritates him, and in a review of much humor Hugo's "Les Travailleurs de la Mer" is frankly laughed at. The chief defect of the articles as criticism is that the writer, forecasting his later obsession, interests himself more in technical literary faults and virtues, particularly the former, than in the books as a whole. But aside from this defect, consider-

ing the writer's youth, the reviews are amazingly good reading. They show ability to reason from the general to the particular—the mark of a first-rate critic.

M. la Rose in a sympathetic preface writes, "James... was never a popular author and even the most devout Jacobite must admit... that he was not a 'great' one." We admit no such thing. If humor and imagination (immortal pair!) and sympathy in conjunction with a style of infinite subtlety and taste do not, in their divine infusion, as in "The Portrait of a Lady", make for a "greatness", if not a grandeur, we can name no "great" novel. And these reviews give more than a hint of the novelist's future—the same elevation of thought, the impatience at shabby personalities, the recognition of the beauty of the innocent and the bad taste, not to say downright wickedness, of the sentimental.

The dramatic skill to create a swift climax and a setting to emphasize the suspense, marks the eleven stories of the underworld which Richard Washburn Child has collected in "The Black Velvet" (Dutton). There is a good deal of similarity in the tales, especially in regard to structure—most of them reveal some arresting quality of character upon which the situation is made to turn. The author understands the value of unity and has the knack of giving verity to a unique circumstance by convincing portrayal of attending commonplaceness. The stories seem to reflect an intimate