

Freeman, Macaulay, Carlyle, Tout. Professor Trevelyan, unlike some of these, has the distinction of combining picturesqueness and lightness of touch with a due regard to facts. As in his earlier work, he finds all grist that comes to his mill, and in making the extremely defunct Queen and her times live again does not, I am glad to see, ignore the useful service done to the history of his period by such writers as Thackeray and Scott.

In a survey of the year it seems impossible to omit the final volume of Buckle's "Letters of Queen Victoria." This is a great task successfully completed, and though the last phase (1896-1902) which ends with the sombre falling of the curtain may possibly hold less interest than some that preceded it, no future historian of the Victorian Age can afford to overlook this important contribution to its story.

During the year, an admirable series of cheap biographies, many of them historical, has been issued by Mr. Peter Davies. Almost without exception these are deserving of very high praise; they are accurate, suggestive, vivid, and carefully written. Miss Mona Wilson gives us a useful little study of Queen Elizabeth; Sir John Fortescue's "Marlborough," which helps to clear away many of the popular misconceptions about one of the great Englishmen of his own or any age, is of especial value in view of Mr. Winston Churchill's forthcoming book on his famous ancestor; and I think I may select as one of my list John Buchan's "Julius Caesar" for inclusion in the historical section of any library. Another excellent series during the past year is "Great Mediæval Churchmen," published by Messrs. Methuen at the low price of six shillings, and of interest not only to theologians but to educationalists and students of the political changes of the Middle Ages.

"The Revolt of the Netherlands (1555-1609)" by P. Geyl, strikes me as one of the important books of the year, as a corrective of Motley's intensely interesting but not too accurate history of the Low Countries during this period has long been overdue. I think I will choose next Sir Charles Petrie's "The Jacobite Movement," and as a final selection "Metternich," by Arthur Herman. The "Prime Minister of Europe" in his day, Metternich's attitude towards France contrasted with that of Bismarck in a later generation is deserving of fresh study in the light of present problems.

Criticism's sister, Opinion, is too volatile a lady (I fear) to make any special selection like this of great importance or value. "Men and Women of Plantagenet England," by Dorothy Margaret Stuart, is a book worth mention in a general survey; it gives an accurate and vivid picture of the thirteen Plantagenet kings and their times; the chapter on "Craftsmen" is particularly well done, and includes many little known facts about the methods of the old-time worker. The addition to the Record Office "Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII" should not be forgotten; here is the rough material of history which, not infrequently, is quite as interesting as fiction in the pages of this publication. Then there is the History of the Hudson Bay Company, by Robert E. Pinkerton, and among historical biographies of the year one notes "Peter Abailard," by J. G. Sikes, "Alexander the Great," by Professor Ulrich Wileken, "William IV," by Grace E. Thompson, "Mazzini," by Gwilym O. Griffith, "Arnold of Brescia," by G. W. Greenaway, "Albert the Good," by Hector Bolitho, Dr. G. J. Renier's Life of the Princess Charlotte, and Mr. Duff Cooper's Life of Talleyrand.

POETRY OF 1932

By Geoffrey Grigson

Verse-publishing does not pay, and (unless the poet has paid) most books of verse should be regarded as publishers' conscience money, i.e. money that cannot be spared in times of crisis. There has then been less than the usual quantity of verse during the last twelve months. Richard Church, Edmund Blunden, the Poet Laureate—all these have reminded us of their names; and Mr. J. C. Squire is threatening. Yet in general this magnificent verse-year has done poorly in numbers; and 1933 threatens to do poorer still. Magnificent? In the summer "The Orators" was published; and the one critic who declared it the most important poem since "The Waste Land" spoke with a correct fervour. One need say in THE BOOKMAN little more than has already been said at length: that "The Orators" creates a world, is distinguished by reality of language and dramatic quality of versification and performs a fine service of creative satire, when standards have shrivelled and complacency and dullness are the two Mussolinis we obey.

"The Orators" has been better received by personal recommendation than any book of verse for some years. There has been little of the drivelling ecstasy (in which I confess myself to have been a collaborator) which welcomed Mr. Roy Campbell's megaphonic "Adamastor" two years ago. Reviewers have been frightened by "The Orators." There have been admissions of its power; but reviewers were most of them very anxious to show how clever they were in finding sources. Rimbaud, says one; St. J. Perse, says another; Wilfred Owen, says a third; and 'strewth,' say I (quoting W. H. A.) when one blockhead accuses him in part of Emily Dickinson. Yet there is an obvious source in W. H. Auden; and because "The Orators," a new machine propelled with magnificent horse-power, comes from W. H. Auden, and not from

this or that other poet, it ranks 1932 with the year that was happy in coinciding with "The Waste Land."

Otherwise the year has been like most years. D. H. Lawrence's "Last Poems" are mainly notes for anything but poems; but the slightest annotations of genius are worth examining. "New Signatures," with its contributions from Auden, Day Lewis and Spender, maps the arterial, dotting in a by-road, well-metalled, but blind perhaps in William Empson; and the rest must be anthologising. Sir Edmund Chambers has produced an anthology

in the Oxford series that can be praised (though for the unbaptized Q-like titles have sometimes been invented). His period has little contemporary relevance, though in the adolescent lyricism one can survey the cause of revolt and in the longer and more serious work (Raleigh's "Ocean to Cynthia," for example) one

can detect the metaphysical beginnings. Mr. Untermeyer's arm-benders have more utility than value. In the earlier of them, one can neglect the introduction, the Anne Bradstreets and Whittiers for the section of native ballads and folk-songs. In the second (now in its fourth edition, enlarged—actually—and revised) every variety of fiddle-faddle can be found from the Kreymbourg variety, the Edna St. Vincent Millay variety, the E. E. Cummings variety to the Louis Untermeyer (critical and poetical) variety. Yet apart from Emily Dickinson, with whom the book begins, Robert Frost, and perhaps Conrad Aiken, who are all familiar in England, there are readable poets whom it may introduce. The most sensible thing for Mr. Untermeyer to do would be to cut out all the American Churches and Blundens, Gibsons and Humbert Wolfes and present English readers with a reduced selection, including poems by such as John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Donald Davidson, and Hart Crane; and he might also omit all his own miniature, well-manicured "criticisms."

"The Orators." By W. H. Auden.
 "New Signatures." Collected by Michael Roberts.
 "Last Poems." By D. H. Lawrence.
 "American Poetry to Whitman" and "Modern American Poetry." Edited by Louis Untermeyer.
 "Oxford Book of Sixteenth Century Verse." Chosen by E. K. Chambers.



The Five Sisters, York Minster.

From a proof in the possession of Frank Rinder, Esq.

From "Masters of Etching," by D. Y. Cameron (Studio).



From "THE CHRISTOPHER ROBIN VERSES,"
Illustrated by E. H. SHEPARD
(Methuen).

POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY OF THE YEAR

By Collin Brooks

The year has been unusually rich in political biography. Asquith, Cromer, Hicks Beach, Redmond, Carson, Herbert Gladstone and Walter Leaf make an assorted gallery, though it is true that the life of Carson was represented only by its first volume and dealt rather with the lawyer than the politician, and that Leaf was only a politician in the broadest sense. Had Mr. Garvin's eighteen-year-long effort resulted, as was hoped, in the publication of the first part of his life of Chamberlain in time for inclusion in this survey, the harvest would have been even more strikingly rich.

The Life of Lord Oxford and Asquith by Mr. J. A. Spender and Mr. Cyril Asquith was a model of intimate, formal biography. It was, in one sense, the misfortune of the biographers that the periods which it covered had so fully and so recently been explored by the biographers of Campbell-Bannerman and Harcourt, by Haldane in his autobiography, by Asquith himself in his own memoirs, and by the biographers of Lansdowne and King Edward VII. Something indeed was left for them to reveal, but that something was not the first revelation. The tragedy of Gladstone's tenacity in his last Cabinet; the bitter feeling between Rosebery and Harcourt; the attempt to force "C.-B." to the Lords for the greater glory of Grey, Haldane and Asquith; the origin of the attack on the House of Lords after the 1909 Budget and the complicated negotiations to avoid a definite clash on the Constitutional issue; the similar and equally abortive negotiations over the Home Rule Bill; the inwardness of the Curragh incident; the entry of Britain into the War and the betrayal of Asquith first by certain of his own generals in the field and later by his Cabinet colleagues of the First Coalition—these episodes in history were known even before Asquith's death. His biographers however filled the duty of making clear Asquith's own motives and his own views of these events.

The respect with which Edward VII regarded his first Liberal Premier and the affection—for it was no less—that developed between Asquith and the new monarch, George V, affected the history of constitutional monarchy in Britain. Another Premier might either have forced upon the Crown actions repugnant to its wearers or weakly permitted a court sycophancy to divert a policy from its logical conclusions. Asquith did neither.

Not the least interesting parts of the Life were to be found in the appendices, one of which presented a list of the gentlemen who were to have been invited to accept peerages to ensure the passage of the Parliament Act. The list contained some unexpected names, ranging from J. M. Barrie and Anthony Hope (an old legal friend) to Sir John Gorst, who had been Disraeli's organiser of victory in the seventies. Other appendices gave the full text of Asquith's memoranda to the King on the difficult points of precedent involved in the struggle with the peers and the coercion or exclusion of Ulster from the Home Rule Bill.

The revelations of Asquith's personal character and life changed in many respects the popular image of that statesman. His tender love romance in youth, leading to his marriage with Helen Asquith on a too meagre income and the establishment of a ménage wherein the husband displayed a boyish fondness for fireworks and was apt to spend a carefully hoarded £300 on a necklace for his wife, was followed by an early widowerhood and the romance

of his infatuation with Margot Tennant, who was no less infatuated with him. The second marriage, regarded doubtfully by the friends of each, gave Asquith a happiness only to be known by one who has found both love and comradeship with a complementary being. Here indeed was an attraction of opposites which would have pleased Schopenhauer.

Behind the detailed story of Asquith's career was the true romance of the poor boy—an orphan left to the bounty of relatives—who by sheer intellect and character rose to a dominance in the state rarely paralleled. Had Asquith not been of such classic mould—had he seemed less Roman and more romantic—that rise would long ago have been seen as more striking than any since Disraeli, exceeding even that of the "cottage-bred man," Mr. Lloyd George, and that of another lawyer, Lord Birkenhead.

The life of Earl St. Aldwyn—"Black Michael" to his contemporaries—was belated. It performed two great services to its subject's memory, for it threw a new and grateful light on the true rôle played by Hicks Beach in the débâcle of Bartle Frere, and it showed the old Lion enjoying an Indian summer of power at the opening of the War when the bankers, of whom he had become one, had lost their heads.

Both Asquith and Hicks Beach were Chancellors of the Exchequer; both were

conservative financiers; both were economisers. It was the lot of the one to be responsible for the finance of the Boer War period and of the other to make almost inevitable the new Lloyd Georgian finance by a too-sanguine reduction of taxation in the Budget of 1908, which established Old Age Pensions. The student of national fiscal policy will find both these biographies essential to the creation of a sound perspective over the years of transition which began with the Harcourt Death duties. It was Asquith, incidentally, who first made a differentiation between earned and unearned incomes, itself a logical development of the Harcourtian conception.

The memoir of Herbert Gladstone by Sir Charles Mallet provided in some ways an addendum and a sidelight to the life of Asquith. Herbert Gladstone was Asquith's junior at the Home Office, and was Liberal Whip at a time when the leadership was in doubt. For a moment there was a chance that he, and not Campbell-Bannerman, might be the Moses to lead the exiles from the wilderness. But Herbert Gladstone's virtues were too negative. The story of his career proves only the old truth that virtue, even political virtue allied with filial piety, can be very dull. Asquith's successor at the Home Office and a Governor-General of South Africa, Herbert Gladstone, to borrow Sidebotham's telling phrase applied to the present Lord Salisbury), bore but hardly wielded the sword of his great name. He renounced the life of a don to become his father's secretary, and after a career that barely rose above mediocrity, he emerged from placid oblivion to defend his father's moral character. The best that can be said of him is that Sir Charles Mallet's memoir will be a pleasant memorial to the family and its friends, and the older Liberals at Leeds where the son took the seat the father would not have.

The life of Walter Leaf, partly from his own hand and partly from that of his widow, was that of a man akin to Hicks Beach in two regards. Both became bankers, late

- "Lord Oxford and Asquith." By J. A. Spender and Cyril Asquith. 2 vols. 36s. (Hutchinson.)
 "Sir Michael Hicks Beach." By Lady Victoria Hicks Beach. 2 vols. 15s. per vol. (Macmillan.)
 "Lord Cromer." By the Marquess of Zetland. 25s. (Hodder & Stoughton.)
 "Walter Leaf: Some Chapters of Autobiography and a Memoir." By Walter and Charlotte Leaf. 10s. 6d. (Murray.)
 "John Redmond." By Denis Gwynn. 25s. (Harrap.)
 "Lord Carson." By Edward Marjoribanks. Vol. I. 15s. (Gollancz.)
 "Herbert Gladstone." By Sir Charles Mallet. 18s. (Hutchinson.)
 "Montagu Norman." By Paul Einzig. 10s. 6d. (Kegan Paul.)