

BOOKS ABROAD

THE MYTH OF EDEN

ANTHONY EDEN. By *Alan Campbell Johnson*. London: Hale. 1938.

(R. H. S. Crossman in the *New Statesman and Nation*, London)

MR. EDEN has been fêted in America as the man whom Hitler cursed and Chamberlain dismissed. But I wonder what the Americans really made of this discreet aristocrat, with his delight in Rimbaud and Proust, his closed circle of genteel friends and his high-sounding but singularly vague orations on the sanctity of international law. An English Roosevelt? I hardly think so. Though Americans enjoyed the chance of expressing their hatred of Hitler and contempt for Mr. Chamberlain, they can have found little response in Mr. Eden to their crudely Republican love of freedom. Earl Baldwin's protégé is too self-consciously remote from party politics, too Olympian in his assumption that England never was and never will be a democracy. 'We have not got democratic government today. We never had it, and I venture to suggest to Honorable Members opposite that we shall never have it. What we have done in all the progress of reform and evolution of politics is to broaden the basis of oligarchy.' Spoken in 1928, these words of Eden's breathe a Whig hauteur which make Earl Baldwin by comparison scarcely a gentleman. Their author dislikes appeasement, but the dislike is inspired, not by democratic indignation, but by an old-fashioned diplomat's contempt for botched negotiations and for truckling to gangsters. For the Cranbornes and Edens of this world, Mr. Chamberlain is a vulgar parvenu with no feelings for the Foreign Office tradition and no respect for international etiquette.

Mr. Campbell Johnson's book helps to explain this paradox. It would have been

a great deal more useful if it had contained less of Mr. Johnson and more of Mr. Eden. But in spite of this defect, *Anthony Eden* contains many of the relevant facts and some useful quotations, though far too few, from Mr. Eden's speeches. The material is sufficient at least for a discussion of the Myth of Eden.

Anthony Eden became a popular hero when the requirements of Conservative policy seemed to coincide with the practice of Collective Security. Between 1926 and 1934 he was an opponent of the Geneva Protocol, the Optional Clause, and of League action in Manchuria; and as late as 1935 he showed no sort of enthusiasm for the Peace Ballot. He poured scorn on the League when it could have been used for disarmament and revision and the strengthening of German democracy; and was only converted to its use when the Foreign Office needed an instrument for curbing the ambitions of the Nazis. Even then he was a party to the fantastic notion of combining sanctions and conciliation, of building a Stresa Front and defending Ethiopia simultaneously.

THE Myth of Eden won the election of 1935 and survived the Hoare-Laval Pact. But there is nothing to prove that a difference of *principle* existed between him and either Sir Samuel Hoare or Mr. Chamberlain over the Ethiopian and Spanish crises. He agreed with them that Britain must always retain complete freedom with regard to participation in League action against an aggressor and 'refrain from dividing Europe into ideological camps.' Like them, he was concerned not to strengthen the democratic forces in Spain, but 'to maintain law and order' and to isolate the war even when this meant the victory of Fascism. He only resigned when Mr. Chamberlain decided to jettison his Foreign Office

advisors and experiment with appeasement. Even then, the difference was about means and not about ends.

For this circumstances were largely to blame. Certainly Mr. Eden himself was not an accomplice in the making of the Eden Myth. He conceived of the League Council as a permanent council of Ambassadors; and frankly based his policy upon the *entente cordiale*. Himself a party to the indefinite postponement of oil sanctions, he objected to the manner, not to the matter, of the Hoare-Laval Pact and of the Anglo-Italian understanding. But alas! like Sir Robert Vansittart, he has been rejected by the interests which he served and worshipped by a public which he disdains. And he remains a Conservative not through cowardice or personal loyalties; but because he is passionately convinced that the methods and objectives of pre-War diplomacy are still valid in 1938.

Like the German Junkers, Anthony Eden fears Fascism not because it destroys the labor movement, but because it challenges the traditional authority of the old ruling class and undermines the old diplomatic order. Mr. Chamberlain comes to terms with the dictators because he fears revolution; Eden refuses to except on his own terms, because he has no idea what social revolution means. Exclusively a diplomatist, he has not Mr. Chamberlain's business appreciation of the class war.

That is why Mussolini and Hitler cannot abide him. He is so Olympian in his aloofness from the problems of industrial life that he is quite unmoved by talk of the Communist menace. For him Bolshevik, like Tsarist, Russia is simply a factor in the international game, and Hitler another variant of Wilhelm II. Possibly he may lead the Tory Party back to its traditional diplomacy—ignorance is often in politics a sublime virtue, since it strengthens faith—but, unless he suffers a conversion, he can never inspire a democratic revival either abroad or at home.

Not for him even the rôle of Kerensky.

This does not mean that he could not be useful to democracy. A reactionary, whose immediate policy agrees with that of the Left, can always be of service to it, especially when his skill is great and his sincerity unquestioned. Mr. Eden could be a capable Foreign Minister under a great democratic leader. But the Eden Myth, which neglects his real qualities and eulogizes virtues which he never possessed, is a dangerous illusion. Mr. Campbell Johnson's book contains facts which should be pondered by readers of the *News Chronicle* and by all who see the necessity of a National Opposition but are ready to place it under die-hard control.

DICKENS UNFULFILLED

EDGAR WALLACE. *By Margaret Lane.*
London: Heinemann. 1938.

(Edward Shanks in *Sunday Times*, London)

HOW far this is a complete and final account of its subject's life and character is more than the outsider can say. There are passages in it which make me feel that we may hear from some of Wallace's friends that it is not entirely fair to him or to some others. But it is consistent and lifelike. The person here depicted is so human, so understandable in all his phases, even the least attractive of them, that I for one shall need to hear a good deal of argument before I revise my impression that Miss Lane has done her work with admirable impartiality as well as with admirable vividness.

It was a life well worth writing on this scale. Wallace was one of the most extraordinary characters of our time: There was an element of greatness in Wallace, though he shamefully wasted it. He had the quality, possessed also by Dickens, of making very large numbers of readers feel that, in some peculiar way, he belonged to them.

Why did he not repeat the success of Dickens? The superficial resemblances between the two careers are strong—the

struggling childhood, the immense popularity, the facility in rendering the humors of ordinary life. But there was one immense difference between the two men. Dickens was careful with money from the first, and left a fortune of some £100,000. Wallace was never anything but wildly careless, and when he died, left debts to the tune of £140,000—though, to be sure, his royalties, partly through wise and devoted administration, have made his estate now solvent and decidedly profitable.

There were other differences. Wallace's childhood was considerably harder than that of Dickens, and he himself was considerably less precocious. At an age when Dickens was an established author with a comfortable bank balance and more work in hand than he could do, Wallace was just being discharged as a private from the Medical Staff Corps. It was a long time after that before what he would have called 'real money' began to flow into his pocket.

But it is very much to be doubted whether, even if he had been early established, he would ever have lived a prudent and thrifty life. He was incapable of regulating the expenditure either of cash or of talent. It was his invariable habit to count the profits before he counted the cost. In fact, he never did count the cost until the bills began to come in, by which time he had already optimistically spent the profits. He was in fact, feckless alike in spending and earning. For a long time he sold his books outright, often for sums of less than £100, because money in the hand meant something and the prospect of royalties in the future was meaningless. It was years before he learned that there might be a profitable compromise between the two.

Meanwhile, with every small increase of income he acquired more of those expensive tastes of which it is so hard to get rid. He could write on racing not only readably, but with an air of authority, but he was a reckless and unsuccessful backer of horses, and later a far from successful

owner. His house and its furnishings must be precisely what he wanted—even if he had wanted as much, and bought, something quite different a month before. Then when he was handling money in large sums his generosity to those around him was so lavish and indiscriminate that sometimes it seems more like a form of luxury than genuine munificence.

So more and ever more money was needed. Sometimes, before he was established, his income fell so far below his needs that the bailiffs were in the house and his clothes had to be sold. Later the maintenance of the vast stream of expenditure meant a perpetual juggling with finance. It meant also the maintenance of a vast stream of work.

HERE, though Dickens worked hard, too hard for his own good, the comparison which suggests itself is not with him but rather with Dumas. It is doubtful whether even Dumas (who, to be sure, had no dictaphone) ever approached him. Miss Lane writes:—

His speed of writing—or, rather, of dictation—had increased through long years of practice until even his most intimate friends were baffled by it. Sir Patrick Hastings, spending a week-end at Chalklands, Edgar's country house, had seen him dictate a full-length novel, *The Devil Man*, between Friday night and Monday morning, and had been aghast at Edgar's airy assurance that the feat was nothing extraordinary.

He slept for two days after this, but, even if one adds these days to the time taken in composition, it is still not long for a novel which I remember as highly competent and exciting.

It is quite possible that this method of writing was the one which suited him best. A reviewer in an intellectual journal once accused him of having materially changed the appearance of his chief character two or three times, and added that this was a proof of his having written in too much haste. Not at all, said Wallace, in a bantering but courteous and fundamentally seri-

ous reply—the trouble was that he had written too slowly, there had been time for him to forget. My memory may deceive me, but I think he went on to apologize for having spent the unforgivable time of a fortnight on this novel.

He was helped in his speed by a capacity to do with a low average number of hours of sleep and to fit in those hours as might be most convenient. Like most men who abuse this capacity, he suffered for it in the end. Miss Lane makes it clear that the real cause of his death was not, as was supposed at the time, pneumonia, but diabetes mellitus. This, she suggests, was induced by his habit of drinking innumerable cups of highly sweetened tea while he was working. But surely this habit was a symptom rather than a cause? It supplied, in unnatural quantities, the food for the unnatural demand he made on his nervous energy.

In the end, I stand by what I said once before: that he was 'our great lost Dickens.' Perhaps he was, regarding him on this plane, lost to us before ever he became a writer of books and plays. Dickens may have been saved to us because the challenge of his childhood was severe but just not too severe, while the challenge of Wallace's childhood implanted in him an excessively strong desire to attain luxury. It may seem over-serious, in discussing Edgar Wallace, to invoke the terms of Professor Toynbee's theory of challenge-and-response. But I do not think that it is. Through the unimaginable millions of words that Wallace wrote lies scattered in infinitesimal particles something comparable to what made Dickens what he was. One might perhaps make the comparison, one between radium in pitchblende and gold in quartz—except that it would be foolish to suggest that Dickens's gold is a less lively metal than Wallace's radium.

Let me end with a humbler metaphor. Wallace may have often spread the butter rather thin, but it is astonishing to think how much butter there was to spread. I will add that I find the life of Wallace as

interesting to read as that of Dickens, and that Miss Lane has done her job a good deal better than Forster did his.

[*The American edition of Edgar Wallace will be published by Doubleday, Doran.*]

POLITICAL TRIALS

LA DÉFENSE ACCUSE: DE BABEUF A DIMITROV. By Marcel Willard. Paris: Édition Sociale Internationale. 1938.

(Stéfan Priacel in *Regards*, Paris)

MARCEL WILLARD has just written a moving and significant book. It is particularly timely now when the moral standards of the world have reached a new low and the cause of justice, freedom and humanity seem lost. The noble examples upon which it draws and the great lesson that emerges from its pages make it a true manual of civic courage.

The former president of the International Juridical Association, Marcel Willard was able to follow closely most of the great political trials of our time. As Dimitrov's defense counsel at the notorious Leipzig Trial, he had the privilege of listening to the heroic self-defense of the redoubtable old fighter. It was a remarkable experience, and Willard profited by it.

His entire juridical experience showed him, moreover, that it was not an isolated case. From Finland and Italy, Yugoslavia and Poland, Rumania and Brazil, Japan and the Asturias he has collected information about similar political trials; about men and women persecuted, judged and condemned because they wished to defend the real interests of their people against the encroachment of more or less avowed totalitarian dictatorships. In examining their trials, Willard finds innumerable analogies, and common—at times identical—traits. In every case, there are two opposing groups, two clashing philosophies. That in power is always the accuser,

as represented by the court and by the official prosecutor. He finds, too, that the judges whose professional function should be to apply the law impartially feel it their duty to take a position in favor of the class which they represent. They are at once judges and partisans. Nor do they even try to defend themselves against such a charge. On the contrary, they glory in being the instruments of the existing system. Such is the set-up that the accused must face—which they invariably do with exemplary fortitude and self-abnegation.

Willard also draws moving and touching pictures of the trials of the Germans Albert Kuntz, Rudolf Klaus, Fiete Schulze, Edgar André; and he tells the story of the workers of Wupperthal, of the Bulgarian martyr Lutibrodsky, of the Hungarian revolutionary Rakosi, of Rumania's Anna Pauker, of the Finn Antikainen, the Japanese Dimitrov, Itsikawa and of many others whom Româin Rolland called 'true heroes of our time.'

Willard is not content with just the contemporary trials: his book bears the subtitle 'From Babeuf to Dimitrov.' Accordingly in his book there are vivid accounts of the trials of Babeuf, of Blanqui, of Karl Marx in Cologne, and of the English Chartist. He describes, too, the three trials that took place during the time of the Commune, the trial of Guesde in France, that of the Russian Bolsheviks before the Tsarist judges, not to mention those of such great German revolutionaries as Wilhelm Liebknecht, Bebel, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht; and he ends by painting the heroic figure of André Marty. They constitute the principal landmarks in the history of the labor movement for the last 140 years.

One essential thesis emerges out of this almost encyclopedic study: in a political trial the accused never attempts to defend himself as an individual. Knowing that the prosecution is striving to injure through him the philosophy or the moral system that he represents, he bends all

his energies to the defense of that philosophy.

MAN AND THE STATE

THE TOTALITARIAN STATE AGAINST MAN.

By Count R. N. Coudenhove-Kalergi.
London: Muller, 1938.

(J. A. Hobson in the *Manchester Guardian*)

'MAN is a creation of God. The State is a creation of man. Man is an end, not a means. The State is a means, and not an end.' In these words Mr. Wickham Steed expresses the thesis of this book, written to show how the complete or totalitarian man is destroyed by the attempt to create a Bolshevik or a National Socialist State.

Count Kalergi is a defender of liberal capitalism. His account of Sovietism damns it both economically and spiritually. In so far as it shows some economic successes, they are due to an abandonment of Communism. The Fascism of Italy and the Nazism of Germany only survive so far as elements of capitalist control lurk in the totalitarian system and the workers (as he contends) have some control in the corporative State. The author says little about the international situation, regarding it as subordinate to the class conflict in the several nations. Our future depends upon the pacific coöperation of bourgeoisie and proletariat. The latter as a power is identified with the peasantry, which, according to the Count, is 'today the only class which is really democratic without mental reservation.' The Count regards private capitalism as essential to successful production, though he would allow the State to check 'monopoly.' England, Switzerland and the United States he takes as permanently capitalist States with the proper amount of central or corporative control.

The political reasoning of this book is exceedingly interesting. But Count Kalergi does not seem to have made any adequate analysis of the processes by which capitalism keeps the rich rich and the poor poor.

OUR OWN BOOKSHELF

A PURITAN IN BABYLON: THE STORY OF CALVIN COOLIDGE. By *William Allen White.* New York: The Macmillan Company. 1938. 460 pages. \$3.50.

MR. WHITE has here written the first honest biography of Mr. Coolidge, and at the same time made a considerable contribution to the understanding of the twenties, one of the most delirious and pathetic epochs in the national annals. Obviously he went to enormous pains to ascertain the facts and to dig up the motives behind the persistent legends regarding the late President, and the charitable outlook resulting from his dabbling with the art of fiction plainly helped him in his search for a soul-pattern in his subject. The present volume is as unbiased as a stethoscope, as revealing as an x-ray photograph, and yet filled with the kindness all knowing men exercise when sitting in judgment upon their fellows.

President Coolidge, Mr. White makes abundantly clear, was a welter of contradictions, like all the children of women. Though abrupt in manner and in correspondence, he displayed extraordinary generosity and sympathy to both the mighty and the lowly, from captains of finance to small town barbers. An uncompromising Republican and master politician, whose major income all his mature life came from the public coffers, his one abiding vanity apparently was his literary style, despite his almost congenital resistance to the reading of imaginative works and the company of writers. Barely a spark of sentiment can be found in his public addresses, but the available evidence concerning his attachment to his wife Grace indicates an enormous capacity for enduring romance. Cautious to the extreme, he nevertheless took chances with his political career when he felt friendship or principle was paramount. Finally, though he was for more than thirty years in the thick of an historic change in the instruments of communal living, he remained all his days ignorant of what went on before his eyes and, perhaps as a consequence, exhibited a revolting moral callousness to the sufferings of the millions economically heavy-laden and spiritually sore beset.

To his last moment among the living, as he made ready to take his final shave at noon on January 5, 1933, he believed that the wealthy, in accordance with God's will, were almost

invariably also the wise and the good. The elephantine signs on the wall, in 1926, 1927 and 1928, of the collapse to come, impressed him as no more menacing than passing summer clouds, and the holocaust of 1929 did not shake his basic faith that the good government demanded little more than 'tax reduction, debt reduction, tariff stability and economy,' and that 'common sense is the real solvent for the nation's problems at all times—common sense and hard work.' Naturally, the New Deal, with its 'Socialistic notions' and 'new-fangled things,' made so little sense to him that he decided he had better devote his remaining years to Northampton, Massachusetts, where his old friends, particularly George Dragon the barber, still believed in 'economy.'

Mr. Coolidge's philosophy, naïve to the point of otherworldliness, was not peculiar to him but reflected the philosophy of the 'best minds' of his day—President Abbott Lawrence Lowell of Harvard, Bishop William T. Manning, H. L. Mencken, the editors of the New York *Herald Tribune*, President Nicholas Murray Butler of Columbia, Charles E. Mitchell of the National City Bank. Some of them read more books than the late President, but all of them were as lacking as he in worldly understanding and in that ultimate honesty which knows why 'rich men never whistle, poor men always do.' As their mouthpiece and symbol Mr. Coolidge in large measure, no doubt, spoke the national mind of his era, which, perhaps, marked the real end of the frontier spirit that sought to reach Paradise upon a ladder made of savings bank books.

Mr. White's excellent book, in helping to clarify the man Coolidge, also sheds much light upon the now almost mythological time he lived in. It raises at least as many interesting—and in the end, very likely, unanswerable—problems as it solves, but that only offers further proof of its value. It promises to be his most memorable volume.

—CHARLES ANGOFF

PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT IN ENGLAND. By *Harold J. Laski.* New York: Viking Press. 1938. 383 pages. \$3.50.

PROFESSOR LASKI'S latest study, of the workings of the British Constitution in the post-War flux of economic and social change