



Stanley Baldwin with his wife and daughter "the tree blossomed."

The Old Master of Commons

"Stanley Baldwin," by G. M. Young (*British Book Centre*. 266 pp. \$4.50), is an "authorized biography" of the British Prime Minister from 1933 to 1937. Here it is reviewed by Lindsay Rogers, professor of public law at Columbia.

By Lindsay Rogers

THEY HATE ME SO, wrote Stanley Baldwin in 1940 after the fall of France, and he stayed away from London because the police feared that his appearance there would cause a hostile demonstration. Yet three years before, at the coronation of George VI, the then Prime Minister "almost divided the cheering with the royal pair themselves." The change of opinion had come about because of the belief that Baldwin, as Prime Minister, failed from 1933 to 1937 to educate the British electorate on the necessity of rearmament and that he even kept from Parliament full information on the extent to which Hitler had been successful in substituting guns and planes for butter.

G. M. Young and Lord Baldwin were friends and the latter asked "somewhat languidly" whether the former would care to write his Life. Mr. Young agreed, and it occasionally appears that he may have done so in a "languid" fashion as well. The result is an "authorized life," but the opposite of the conventional and frequently dull Life and Letters of a

British Statesman. In some subjects Baldwin took no interest at all. When the cabinet discussed foreign affairs he would say, "Wake me up when you have finished that," and try to get a nap. He kept no diary, rarely wrote a letter on politics, and circulated no memoranda to his colleagues. Sir Winston Churchill could not have written his magnificent volumes on two world wars if he had been so taciturn vis-à-vis his secretaries, his colleagues, and potentates and princes.

This life is partly Boswellian in character, for Mr. Young spent extended periods with Baldwin when he lived in retirement. Space is apportioned rather loosely. There are only nine pages on Baldwin before he entered Parliament in 1908, at the age of forty-one, and proceeded to demonstrate—although not until the end of the war—that he would be an exception to Wilberforce's rule that men did not succeed in the House of Commons unless they entered it before they were thirty.

Not long ago *The Times Literary Supplement* quoted Sir Harold Nicolson (who wrote lives of Dwight Morrow and George V) as saying that a good biography should encourage people "to believe that man's mind is in truth unconquerable and that character can triumph over the most hostile circumstances, provided only that it remain true to itself." By this test Mr. Young's biography is not a good one. Few "authorized" authors have been so harsh on their subjects. Considering the place that Baldwin

took in the public eye and the fact that he had the trust and affection of a whole people, Mr. Young thinks that at the time of the general election in 1935 the Prime Minister should have said to himself: "Make the sacrifice, resign. Tell the world that the task to which you set your hand is accomplished; that you are a man of peace and that we are entering on a Passage Perilous where other gifts are needed. You will startle the world; you will dismay the country. But that dismay is the shock they need. The most frantic pacifist never called you a warmonger, and if you released from office, discharged from party, say 'Arm', even pacifists will listen."

But in one respect Baldwin did Great Britain a great service and Mr. Young does not overemphasize its importance. In 1924 and again in 1929 Baldwin wanted Labour to form minority governments to prepare them for the time when they would have a majority in the House of Commons. Thus, a good many Labour ministers had had ministerial experience before Mr. Attlee formed his Cabinet in 1945. And Baldwin had prepared the Conservative Party to oppose but not to be irreconcilable. Of the Prime Minister one of his supporters cruelly said, "If he is a Gladstonian Liberal, let him lead the Liberals. If he is a Socialist, Labour would no doubt be glad to have him. But he cannot lead the Conservatives as a mixture of both." That is just what Baldwin did and he prevented the two great British parties from turning into Guelphs and Ghibellines.

To many readers it will come as a surprise to learn that Baldwin took first rank as an orator. Mr. Young justifies this high opinion by many quotations from speeches. Given the fact of Baldwin's eloquence, it is fortunate that the pages which are his biographer's own do not present a sharp contrast. On the other hand, it is unfortunate that Mr. Young makes his debut to the generality of American readers with this biography. He is an accomplished historian and essayist—sometimes a little precious, but urbane, felicitous and literate. His "Gibbon" and "Charles I and Cromwell" are admirable pieces of work. This biography is not without admirable qualities, but it leaves a good many questions unanswered. Lord Beaverbrook was wrong when he said that Baldwin was not "of prime ministerial timber." The tree blossomed—when he caused the breakup of Lloyd George's coalition in 1922, in the preparations of the General Strike of 1926, and in the abdication crisis. The trouble was that sometimes the tree seemed to be dead.

Egbert's Crown vs. Eve's Daughter

"Gone with the Windsors," by **Iles Brody** (J. C. Winston Co. 327 pp. \$3.50), is a gossip account of the public and private lives of former King Edward VIII of England and his Baltimore-born wife. Our reviewer, George Curry of the history department of the University of South Carolina, is the author of an unpublished doctoral dissertation on the abdication crisis, in the preparation of which he used many papers still kept as state secrets.

By George Curry

ILES BRODY'S excuse for the title, and for the many near-libelous statements in "Gone with the Windsors," his "true story" of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, is his contention that between them they nearly destroyed the British monarchy. History requires, he believes, a correction of the deliberately false impression given by the Duke's memoirs, "A King's Story." He presents the thesis—correct in this reviewer's opinion—that Edward VIII's abdication was in effect a crisis of character, resulting from the King's personality rather than from intrigue by Stanley Baldwin, C. G. Lang, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Geoffrey Dawson, editor of the *London Times*. For some who still believe in the conspiracy-against-Edward theory after the publication of J. G. Lockhart's biography of Lang, G. M. Young's memoir on Baldwin, and the Duke's artless autobiography, "Gone with the Windsors" may serve its intended purpose. But it is so malevolently written that the author surely forfeits any claim to being an unbiased observer. Nor are his quoted sources such as would enable him to make a fully trustworthy contribution to the record.

Mr. Brody presents the Windsors as monsters of egotism with nary a redeeming feature. His colorful information on the Windsors' present way of life is drawn from such authorities as Walter Winchell, Cholly Knickerbocker, and Elsa Maxwell. Details of Edward's earlier career and abdication are taken, apparently uncritically, from *Time* magazine (1936 vintage), its British equivalent *Cavalcade*, and the like. Yet, as the author remarks, during most of Edward's reign the American press, which often

finds British royalty a heady draught, was "trigger-happy, punchdrunk with the greatest romance ever."

By his lack of discrimination and detachment, Mr. Brody runs his subject into the ground, or rather, into dirt and distortion. For example, he portrays Prime Minister Baldwin as a simple man of unerring judgment. Actually, Edward had to deal with a master politician of extraordinarily complex character. To the last Baldwin tried to retain the King, overestimating his power to influence a wilful and unhappy sovereign to whom the possibility of abdication had undoubtedly occurred even before his accession. After their strained negotiations Baldwin freely—and sincerely—acknowledged Edward's better qualities. Mr. Brody's black-and-white picture fails to convey the subtleties of the relationship between King and Minister. His unfavorable appraisal of Sir Walter Monckton, the Sovereign's advisor after the virtual dismissal of Major Hardinge, his Private Secretary, is based entirely on information from "A King's Story," a source he himself characterizes as suspect.

the present reduced fortunes of Great Britain are in some measure attributable to the follies of Edward VIII. There is no evidence that Windsor could have prevented the general decline of his country's power. If anything, hindsight indicates that the abdication, though it had the makings of a national disaster, was a fortunate thing for the Commonwealth and that the former King's own supposition that the British people might prefer someone more like his father has proved correct.

All the facts cannot be known until circumstances permit—if they ever should—the release of such accounts as Sir Walter Monckton's, written shortly after the events concerned, the private memoranda of Sir Thomas Dugdale, Baldwin's Parliamentary Secretary, of Hardinge, and of Barrington-Ward, Dawson's assistant on the *London Times*. Sir Harold Nicolson's extensive notebooks certainly contain information valuable to future historians, and Lord Wigram, former Private Secretary to George V, has deposited important material in the Royal Archives.

Mr. Brody's book provides entertaining reading for those who like their gossip about the international set hot and strong, but it must be classified with the mass of secondary material about the Windsors. As a serious commentary it is as biased as the royal memoirs which it attacks.



—Wide World.

The Windsors and Elsa Maxwell—"gossip . . . hot and strong."