

from their factories as they could, put their daughters on horses, and even went fox-hunting themselves.

It was all natural enough. Social snobbery is the inevitable outcome of affluence in a deeply stratified society. What in America goes into competitive snobbery about culture or visible display of wealth, in Britain goes into a violent competitive expenditure for social status. And it still goes on. Boarding school places are so much in demand among parents who never went to one that sons now have to be entered before they are born. Fox-hunting has never been more popular, although most hunters' parents scarcely knew one end of a horse from the other. Coming-out dances for daughters have reached new heights of fatuous extravagance. Country cottages are at such a premium in Southern England that there is an appalling housing crisis for agricultural laborers. Even stately homes are now in demand.

Like their ancestors, those who have become rich as a result of the scientific and technological revolution seem eager to remove themselves with all possible speed from the sources of their wealth. And yet, to do so is, nationally speaking, suicidal. Already too much talent in Britain is withdrawn from productivity, because industry is not regarded as gentlemanly.

It is unlikely that anything short of a social revolution can break this stranglehold of the past. How weird and comic a people we must seem to others! Mr. Sampson's excellent portrayal of Britain disguises nothing of our oddity. His book makes wonderful, if gloomy, reading for a native.

A Change In The Weather

By Robert Necker

AT 2 a.m. windy spring slept
the cat yawned the rain wet lightly
the black hair of Betty
raindrops crept
about the wrists of the dark leaves.

Now leaves are dark as
a nun's grave shoes. And full of
witches' veins. The cat
is dead of summer.
Now is the season that shivers in loneli-
ness nearing humped winter.

Hurt the leaves autumn rain rip all
the leaves. Let them
fall. Wind
be the death of leaves which saw me
lose Elizabeth.

No Party to Appeasement

"The Memoirs of Anthony Eden, Earl of Avon: Facing the Dictators" (Houghton Mifflin. 746 pp. \$7.50), chronologically precedes the British statesman's earlier volume of autobiography, "Full Circle," and covers the fateful years 1923-1938. John Clive is associate professor of history at the University of Chicago.

By JOHN CLIVE

THIS is how Winston Churchill looked back on Anthony Eden's resignation as Foreign Secretary in 1938 in his history of the Second World War:

From midnight till dawn I lay in my bed consumed by emotions of sorrow and fear. There seemed one strong young figure standing up against long, dismal, drawling tides of drift and surrender, of wrong measurements and feeble impulses . . . he seemed to me at this moment to embody the life-hope of the British nation. . . . Now he was gone.

The present volume of memoirs describes those tides of drift and surrender from the point of view of one who was not prepared to float along with them. Whatever history's final verdict on Eden will turn out to be—and we now tend to think of him mainly in connection with the ill-fated Suez operation—the record of his diplomacy in the years when Hitler and Mussolini were able to consolidate their power should assure him a place among the few who were into the game the dictators were playing.

Eden was initially willing to give them the benefit of the doubt, until he realized that international agreements were to them no more than scraps of paper. From then on he tried valiantly to convince the successive British governments in which he served that gangsterism in international affairs could only be countered by firmness and strength. For concession and compromise would only be met by ever more intemperate demands. Once again we see unfolded here the melancholy tale of the failures of the Thirties: failure of disarmament conferences, failure to enforce effective sanctions against Italy during the Abyssinian war, failure to stop German remilitarization of the



—Blau (Pix).

Anthony Eden—"the road to Munich might well have been avoided."

Rhineland, failure of "non-intervention" during the Spanish Civil War, failure to take adequate action against Japanese aggressive policies in the Far East, and, above all, failure of the great democracies in Europe and America to act in concert, to negotiate from strength rather than from weakness.

It would be a mistake to imagine that it was the ineptitude of British foreign policy alone that was mainly responsible for these failures. That responsibility must be borne by many people in many countries. But there can be no doubt about the fact that had Baldwin and Chamberlain been more receptive to Eden's prescient advice, the road to Munich might well have been avoided.

Not that Eden was free from error. He should never have consented to the appointment of Sir Neville Henderson as British Ambassador to Berlin, where he spent his time making excuses for the Nazis. Nor should he have tolerated Lord Halifax's ill-timed visit to Berchtesgaden in 1937, which achieved nothing but a loss of dignity for Britain. Again, after the then British Foreign Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, acting without the knowledge of the Cabinet, joined Pierre Laval in 1935 in signing away half of Haile Selassie's Abyssinian territory to Italy, Eden should have

pressed for Hoare's immediate recall to London in order to hasten repudiation of this infamous pact. George V told Eden, who succeeded Hoare at this juncture, "I said to your predecessor: 'You know what they're saying, no more coals to Newcastle, no more Hoares to Paris.' The fellow didn't even smile."

But these errors, freely admitted in this volume, are venial indeed when compared to those committed by his chiefs, and especially by Neville Chamberlain, who became Prime Minister in 1937 and under whom Eden served until his resignation. Several attempts have been made in recent years to vindicate Chamberlain's policies and to make appeasement respectable. But here is a particularly devastating indictment, by someone in a position to know what was going on. It was not only that Chamberlain proved to be tragically wrong in his belief that Hitler and Mussolini were anxious for genuine agreements, and that he was the only man who could really negotiate with them. Time and again, first as Chancellor of the Exchequer, later as Prime Minister, he went behind the Foreign Secretary's back in order to take the sting out of the latter's policies and ingratiate himself with the dictators—who, of course, had nothing but cynical contempt for such weakness.

When, in the late autumn of 1937, Eden complained to Chamberlain about the slow pace of British rearmament, he was told to go to bed and take an aspirin. A few weeks later Chamberlain insisted on opening conversations with Mussolini in which he was prepared to grant *de jure* recognition to the Duce's conquest of Abyssinia, without any advance assurance of reciprocal Italian concessions. At this point Eden decided to resign. It was certainly his finest hour.

This volume of the Eden memoirs ends with the first authoritative version of his resignation. It is well worth reading for that alone, since the events it describes have not yet been covered by the official British history of these years.

Eden is far from being a great stylist. We get glimpses of the leading European statesmen of the time, but these lack depth and subtlety. And occasional anecdotes, some very amusing, do not quite make up for the great quantity and length of quotations from speeches and dispatches. Great, but not excessive. For the book was written not primarily to entertain, but to set one man's record straight. Unlike that of most leading figures of this period, it is a record that bears inspection well.

Answers to Editor's Note on page 15

1. e. e. cummings; 2. Stephen Vincent Benét; 3. T. S. Eliot; 4. John Ciardi; 5. Dylan Thomas.

FICTION

Vacation from Grace

"Vessel of Dishonor," by Paul Roche (Sheed & Ward. 306 pp. \$4.95), probes the dilemma of a Catholic priest, uncertain of his vocation, who breaks his vow of celibacy. Riley Hughes, associate professor of English at Georgetown University, wrote "The Hills Were Liars."

By RILEY HUGHES

SOMEWHAT over a century ago the irascible but perceptive American convert to Catholicism, Orestes Brownson, deplored Catholic novels, even then a flourishing sub-genre, as being "made up of two distinct and separable portions, the sentimental story and the grave religious discussion." Granting a century's difference in outlook, "Vessel of Dishonor," a first novel by Paul Roche, an English Catholic poet and translator, falls remarkably within the terms of Brownson's description. The story line and the religious argument of this sensitive, often beautifully evocative novel become increasingly polarized, and at last perish fatally disjointed.

Mr. Roche's protagonist, when we first encounter him, is an English seminarian, little more than a year away from ordination to the priesthood. On solemn retreat before being made a sub-deacon, the first step in his preparation, Martin Haversham looks back guiltily upon a singular lapse from grace, when he "had broken the horrible spell of his sensual dumbness." He had given himself a vacation in an inextricably pious and pagan Italy, during which he cast aside cassock and "eight years of mortification that had bullied and jostled him" for a bacchic romp with Vanessa MacCullers, an American girl who was enthralled by his legs—"like redwood saplings"—and became a willing Chloe to his Daphnis, to use Mr. Roche's language. His reaction and remorse together propel Martin, now vowed to perpetual celibacy, through ordination and into parish work in London.

Here, where most novels of the genre would end, "Vessel of Dishonor" really begins. Even after ordination Martin is not certain that he has a vocation to the priesthood, nor can he

tell whether or not his rebellion against celibacy is merely in his body or deep down in his spirit. He goes "gallivanting" in a movie-house, meets Peggy (she comes to call him "my gazelle") and takes a flat for her, salving his conscience with an Augustinian "Lord, not yet." This does not last very long either; helped mightily by coincidence, Vanessa reappears, and the narrative comes to a predictable but not wholly earned conclusion.

Mr. Roche writes with such fine poetic choice of image and insight, and so knowledgeably about the forms of ecclesiastical life, that it is worth noting where he puts his foot wrong. The dialogue is often impossibly arch, for one thing. It is hard to put up with a hero who is described, again and again and often within his hearing, as a faun, and whose only response is a complacent silence. In his selective glimpses into Martin's family past and priestly present the author never quite gets Martin himself into focus. He obviously intends Martin as a fatuous cleric, but he seems to have no idea that he is portraying an even more fatuous lover. Everything comes too easily to Martin; he lacks the precise idealism or the precise coarseness, perhaps, that would provide an abrasive quality to his mind and character and make either, if not both, of the stages of his career believable. One does not ask for another beginning or ending for the fellow, but there remains the problem of a tantalizingly missing middle.



Paul Roche—the problem of a missing middle.