

his grace has moved him to genuine Christian charity, though something in the human soil of his upbringing prevented him from seeing the doctrinal truth of the full Christian message? Certainly we must be loath to explain such heroism as graceless.

H.F.D.

QUEEN VICTORIA AND HER PRIME MINISTERS. By Algernon Cecil. (Eyre and Spottiswoode; 25s.)

It was the custom of Carlyle to set on his writing table a portrait of the man he was describing: 'A practice', as Dean Inge remarked some twenty-five years ago, 'which would greatly diminish the output of literary impertinence.' If only for this reason Mr Cecil's book deserves our gratitude. His studies of More and of the foreign secretaries of nineteenth-century England, together with his book *A House in Bryanston Square*, had already put us in his debt, and this last book has more than confirmed our expectations. Written with grace, learning, and a skilful use of anecdote, it is tempered by a quality of reflection which is in the great tradition of English historical writing.

The book opens with a picture of the author's father, the younger brother of the Prime Minister, a soldier and, for twenty years, a member of Parliament. This serves as an introduction to the age, an introduction which effectively disposes of several dangerous half-truths which still prevent a proper comprehension of the Victorians. For instance, few will be inclined, after reading Mr Cecil's book, to believe that complacency and optimism were invariably characteristic of the Englishmen of that day. Lord Salisbury was, in fact, being very typically Victorian when he spoke of 'the essential cowardliness of optimism'. Lord Derby emerges, very properly, with a greatly enhanced reputation. It is interesting to find that he remained unimpressed by Disraeli's mischievous nonsense about the Two Nations. In spite of the title, there is less of the Queen in the book than might have been expected; and yet, on second thoughts, this preserves the proper perspective. For, as Mr Cecil points out, Queen Victoria consciously and skilfully bridged the transition which began when the prime ministers of England were still, in the traditional sense, the ministers of the Crown, and which concluded when they had become in reality, the tribunes of the people; and it is not the least of the great achievements of the English monarchy that the two concepts have not proved contradictory but rather correlative. It was part of the same achievement to mirror the tastes and the family virtues of the nineteenth-century middle class and at the same time to be every inch a Queen who could 'sit beside an Empress (and that Empress one of the loveliest women in Europe) and make Eugénie, as was said, seem a parvenue'. 'I remember', writes Mr Cecil, 'a well qualified eye-witness telling me how much it had amused him to watch Lytton Strachey's face falling as, at the request

of some hostess, a critic no less fine than himself and far more competent—Arthur Balfour—sketched an impression of Victoria as her ministers saw her. 'The fancied figure of fun dissolved like some effigy cast in snow. . ..'

Most readers will find themselves turning for a second time to the intensely interesting essays which deal respectively with Disraeli and Gladstone. Where Disraeli is concerned Mr Cecil considers that we are faced with a mystery which is fascinating if only because it is ultimately inscrutable, while in the case of Gladstone he is substantially in agreement, it would appear, with Lecky's verdict—'an honest man with a dishonest mind'. And yet, at any rate for one reader, it is Gladstone who remains the more mysterious of the two. For, as Disraeli liked to point out, Gladstone could not write, and thus we are denied this window into his personality. Disraeli, however, could do so, and, as one considers his prose style, one wonders whether Lecky's judgment, transposed and transferred, is not as good an answer to the Disraelite mystery as we are likely to get on this side of the grave.

T. CHARLES EDWARDS

A HISTORY OF THE CRUSADES. Vol. II. The Kingdom of Jerusalem and the Frankish East. By Steven Runciman. (Cambridge University Press; 42s.)

In his second volume Mr Runciman takes the Crusading story from the aftermath of the capture of Jerusalem to its recapture by the Moslems under Saladin. As in the previous volume, the author has mobilised all the original sources, Eastern and Western, and the scene depicted runs from the boundaries of Persia to the distant shores of England and France. Over this enormous field Mr Runciman's scholarship moves clearly, accurately and fully, omitting no event of importance, yet never sinking into a monotonous catalogue of ill-related facts. Indeed, amid so much that is admirable, what is perhaps outstanding is his skill in focusing upon Palestine events occurring in Rome or Byzantium, Hungary or Georgia, without ever losing the sense of their relative importance to the brilliant, bellicose life of the Crusading states. Only the complex relationships of the Moslem emirs and atabegs of Asia Minor occasionally confuse the reader, and these would be less confusing if the maps were more numerous and detailed.

The picture he draws is immediately depressing, but not surprisingly so, as it is of the breakdown of the first great common enterprise of the West. The feudal disunity of twelfth-century Europe, transferred in microcosm to the cross-roads of the world, could not hope to maintain itself when once Saladin had united against it its many rabid enemies. The mismanagement and factiousness of the Crusaders is very depressing, and still more so is the vulgarity and intolerance they showed to the Byzantine Empire and the Orthodox Church. They fatally weakened the former and