

IN BRIEF REVIEW

THE despotic egoist riding the floodtide of a brutal reactionary imperialism in Italy today is the outstanding figure of interest in world politics. The fact justifies the fluent, indeed eloquently written "Life of Benito Mussolini" by Margherita G. Sarfatti (Stokes). Written by an "intimate woman friend", with a preface by *il Duce* himself, it naturally presents him as Italy's greatest son. Fascism's best foot is put forward in an animated, sparkling narrative; its dark and sanguinary shadows are mellowed with golden idealistic light; and for the American who would gain an idea at first hand (Frederic Whyte's translation is excellent) of all that *fascismo* — from the Fascist angle — means and is, this is the book. But for all that Mussolini has been endorsed by such great international bankers as Thomas Lamont and Otto Kahn, we recommend that the reader, after perusing this glowing biography, look up the speech Dr. Eliot of Harvard made in New York last January.

In 1905 Poultney Bigelow, having been correspondent for numerous and varied periodicals, and having attained the age of fifty, retired from an extremely spirited life to the seclusion of a New York State farm. Here, after twenty years he evidently decided that his work was not yet finished. In consequence, he has written an autobiography, "Seventy Summers" (Longmans, Green), in which he recounts vividly, and with an admirable lack of caution, his many activities throughout the world. He uses his pen, however, not only for the purpose of narration,

but, pointedly to declare his wide opinions and to air his hobby, religious freedom. Although the book is too journalistic to have actual literary value, it is forceful, demonstrative, broad in scope, and one of the best autobiographies of its kind.

Paul de Kruif, the scientific adviser who supplied Sinclair Lewis with the accurate medical details of "Arrow-smith", in "Microbe Hunters" (Harcourt, Brace) proves the possessor of high skill in the rôle of biographer of celebrated bacteriologists. His non-technical method of presenting the lives of these immortal pioneers makes the volume one of the most exciting, yet instructive, we have read in recent months. The book begins with Leeuwenhoek, earliest discoverer of microbes by means of microscopes invented by himself, and succeeding chapters are occupied by Spallanzani, Pasteur, Koch, Roux and Behring, Metchnikoff, Theobald Smith, Bruce, Ross, Grassi, Walter Reed, and Paul Ehrlich.

During the years immediately following the war a book on Germany was a drug on the market. America had had enough; publishers, booksellers, the reading public, all shunned a volume which in any way recalled Germany to mind. With the return to postwar sanity, this situation is slowly changing as Germany creeps gradually back into the family of nations. Sidney Brooks in his "America and Germany" (Macmillan) realizes that the fate of the two countries is woven together and fearlessly tackles the question of

their relationship during the critical years 1918-1925, taking as his text Herbert Hoover's words: "There is a country of sixty million people with whom the world has to live and whose economic coöperation is necessary to give life to the rest of the world." The Dawes plan and its probable effect is discussed in detail, and Mr. Brooks does not belittle the value to Europe of American dollars in his plea for a fair consideration of the German-American problem. An elaborate "table of personages" adds to the serviceability of the book but does not compensate for the absence of an index.

Patrick Braybrooke, youthful commentator upon G. K. Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc, Lord Morley, and Sir James M. Barrie, continues to write up the great and the good in the manner to which he has been accustomed. His "Considerations on Edmund Gosse" (Lippincott) is now off the presses. While Mr. Braybrooke's book about the books Sir Edmund has written about other books may lack for the man in the street some desired sense of pulsing, throbbing life, the critics, more familiar with such phenomena, may yet discern the Promethean spark. It has been no part of the author's plan to question the works of his subject. His volume, rather, is in the nature of a souvenir or testimonial.

The pleasing feature about Thomas Jefferson was that he grew old remorselessly. He did not, it appears, repent. Nor did he, oddly, yearn for an encore of those charming intrigues which had been his lot. He was one man who had no tears for his own funeral or a sorrowing to look once again upon the face of his Genêt. In the "Correspondence of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, 1812-1826" (Bobbs-Merrill) Paul Wil-

stach, grouping two genuinely early Americans, stays where an interlocutor should — in the background. Meantime, amid a sort of Duncan Phyfe setting — one so recently, so sadly Chippendale — the two remaining Colonials wrote their epitaphs across a Georgian scroll. Mr. Adams, it would seem, was forever philosophizing in the gilded snuff box manner, while Mr. Hamilton's chief critic felt a trifle more keenly the color he'd brought to the Continental scene. Mr. Jefferson would not, naturally, regret anything but that didn't prevent him from remembering he was a Signer or realizing that, in the long prevailing twilight, even then there were god hunters afoot. The tragedy of that highly individualized life was that it should gutter itself out in duet tempo — that it could not have been, on that last momentous July Fourth, the whole day's news. But then Mr. Adams was so pitifully, so wearily old.

The Right Honorable Sir James O'Connor observes in the preface to his sizable two volume "History of Ireland: 1798-1924" (Doran) that the Act of Union of 1800 was a "well intentioned blunder", the forcible insistence upon it by England an injustice and a crime, and he goes on to state that the Treaty of 1921, bringing Ireland intellectual as well as political freedom, seems to him "to be an eminently just bargain". The brief exordium indicates at once the scope, the strategic position, and the temper of this important attempt to sum up, fairly and in a spirit of detachment, "the case of Ireland *v.* England and the cross case of England *v.* Ireland — for there are well founded complaints upon both sides". The eventful Easter Monday of 1916 serves the author as a vivid introduction to a story which at