



SIR GEORGE GREY
His scholarship and veracity passed the acid test

would penetrate the elaborate and elegant facade behind which Digby moved. Such digging and such criticism are in general left to the reader who, however, must be grateful for so rich a provision of varied information.

—F. L. W. Wood

TO CLEAN A POTATO

MR NORRIS AND I . . . by Gerald Hamilton; Allan Wingate, English price 15/-.

THIS strange autobiography was written to astound and to amaze—it succeeds in doing both—possibly also to exculpate. We are frankly left gasping by the “faintly ducal” Hamilton (a relative of the Duke of Abercorn) who numbered among his friends Lord Alfred Douglas, Frank Harris, Aleister Crowley, Casement and a long list of persons of title of all nationalities, including crowned heads, now mostly ex. His international relations no doubt encouraged Hamilton in his desire not to take any crudely emotional view of the enemy in either world war, in both of which he was for a time interned.

One wonders whether Hamilton was thinking of his connections with Casement or some other episode when he commented on his own later appointment as sales representative in Germany of *The Times*: “This seems to show with what ease anybody can today obtain a responsible position, no matter what his past life might have been.”

Some have identified Gerald Hamilton as the Mr Norris in Christopher Isherwood’s novel, “Herr Isshyvoo” himself contributes an introduction in which the question is answered both yes and no. Maurice Richardson repeats a biography of Hamilton he once sketched for *Lilliput*, with some additions.

Hamilton gives himself credit for a consid-

erable fund of idealism, and for good taste, in food and wine. He occasionally tells a good story, and sometimes tells us more of his life even than he intended in his moments of greatest candour. It might be fun to meet him—in someone else’s house.

—David Hall

FRIGHTENED PEOPLE

THE NINTH WAVE, by Eugene Burdick; Victor Gollancz, English price 15/-; *TWILIGHT FOR THE GODS*, by Ernest Gann; Hodder and Stoughton, English price 15/-; *THE FERTILE PLAIN*, by Esther Salaman; the Hogarth Press, English price 15/-; *DESTINATION BERLIN*, by Paul Vialar; Staples, English price 15/-.

THERE have not been many novels published in the last few years which can match *The Ninth Wave* for brilliance of construction. The symbolic significance of the very title persists through this book; yet the whole impression is of blazing realism, almost a terrible honesty. The tone matches the master theme of the hero’s life;

that all human beings are afraid of something. This is the principle which the leading character, Mike Freemith, uses to get his way—in college, in war (where it is mistaken for something noble), and as a lawyer who specialises in political “fixing” of the peculiarly American kind—but which destroys him in the end. It is not pleasant reading, but admiration for a sincere and masterly work comes with reflection.

Ernest Gann’s book is just as competent in its own way, the way of Hemingway, the way of a good story told in good clean punches. What a pity that Gann had to intrude that over-worked American character, the overtly immoral woman with an incorruptible core. Good box-office movie stuff, but not true to life. Otherwise, this story about the last days of an American sailing ship, and the assorted reactions of its crew and passengers to impending catastrophe, is pleasant and convincing.

The Fertile Plain is a rambling novel of reminiscences, strung together without a clearly discernible thread except the passage of time, which is between the two Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1918. In this time a Jewish girl grows up in the Ukraine, and the general effect is one of placid progress, which does not seem to be the impression intended, although it is a pleasant enough book.

Destination Berlin was first published in France under the title *Cinq Hommes de ce Monde*. The names of these men

(continued on next page)

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