On page 404 we reach the summer of 1936, and for the next hundred and fifty pages we have Mr. Compton Mackenzie's views on the abdication of King Edward VIII, though we have, as usual, a great many other things as well. Mr. Mackenzie may be right or wrong in thinking that the King was unfairly treated, and that his advisers mishandled the question of his marriage, but it is futile to suppose that the abdication was carried through against the wishes of the majority of the King's subjects in this country and in the Dominions. Moreover, whatever his opinions may be, Mr. Mackenzie will have put himself out of count for most people by the cheap and silly sarcasm with which he decks out his case. His book is likely to do some harm to the cause which it sets out to defend. It will not do much harm, because few readers other than gossip-hunters will have the patience to get through even a tenth of it. E. L. WOODWARD.

TIME TO SPARE

The Problem of Leisure. By H. W. Durant. (Routledge. 10s. 6d.)

THE right use of leisure forms a problem which has lately much occupied the public attention and been brought to the notice of the readers of this journal by a series of articles. Mr. Durant's book gives a survey of that problem from all its aspects; the relation of leisure to work and to unemployment, the objective facts about the use of leisure time, the reasons for which these various uses are preferred. The real problem of leisure is—why is there a problem at all? Before the machine age there is no sign of its having existed. It is a problem only in advanced capitalist countries; and Mr. Durant's first task is to account for its existence. Its cause is two-fold; machine industry on the one hand deadens personal faculties and interests by repetitive or uncomprehended work, and so cripples the constructive instincts which are necessary to the satisfying use of leisure, and on the other hand breaks up the traditional personal relationships of the small workshop or village community and so destroys also the social framework within which leisure can best be enjoyed. Personally and socially the machine worker leads an incomplete and atomistic existence; fit enough for his task, which generally calls into activity only a fraction of his capabilities, he is unfitted by it for a full human life. Nor is this all. His work is not only overspecialised, it is also tiring—not only is the creative instinct atrophied, the stores of energy which might be called to its fulfilment are exhausted. Finally, any likelihood that the worker might find a dominating interest in the ulterior purposes of the work to which he contributes, an interest which should compensate him for the monotony of his personal task and so vivify at least his mental faculties, is destroyed by the overwhelming social superiority of leisure over work of any kind. A conspicuously leisured class forms the limelit apex of the social pyramid, and its values permeate the whole. The fact that its members are rarely completely leisured, that many of them carry a heavy burden of voluntary work, is not stressed by the publicity which brings them before the general eye. Leisure is opposed to, and not complementary to, work; hence the problem.

At the same time, leisure is increasing. Hours on the whole grow shorter, through Trade Union activities, Government legislation on behalf of young workers, and the occasional initiative of enlightened employers. The institution of holidays with pay will carry the process further. Women's leisure in particular has increased with the fall in the birth-rate. What do people do with their spare time? Mr. Durant discusses the various agencies catering for their demands, from the public house and the greyhound track to the W.E.A. and the Youth Hostels. The picture which he builds up is incontrovertibly a depressing one. More and more passive entertainment, demanding a minimum of co-operation from the entertained, is provided and eagerly accepted; the mindless film, the professional game of football, the pin-table which can be worked by a child. For a vast number of people, the only kind of leisure occupation requiring any sort of application is the filling in of football coupons. On the other hand, there are bright spots. Rambling and cycling clubs, and to a lesser extent the Adult Schools and the W.E.A., all show increases in membership, and these are spontaneous organisations calling upon the active and often exacting participation of their members. Mr. Durant does not mention the increased use of libraries, museums, and galleries, nor, indeed, dwell at all on reading as a leisure occupation; but he might have done so. The two-penny library, on its present scale a very recent growth, does not by any means circulate only trash; and the success of the Penguin and Pelican books points to a general taste better than that assumed by the daily Press. And ahead, if we only have the wits to grasp our opportunities, lie possibilities of a further great revolution in industry; of the wheel coming full circle and mechanisation freeing mankind from its own original consequences. The intelligent master of a machine, unlike its unthinking servant, will not be unfitted by his work for a full human existence. But social change, Mr. Durant insists, must accompany technical evolution. Cramping class barriers, the social premium on idleness, are obstacles; the lack of any sense of organic membership of the community must be remedied. The problem of leisure cannot be solved alone; it is one with the problem of life in society.

HONOR CROOME.

GILBERT WHITE

The Writings of Gilbert White of Selborne. Edited by H. J. Massingham. (Nonesuch Press. £3. 10s.)

OF all English authors, Gilbert White would have been most astounded, I think, by posterity's verdict upon him, not by the prodigious mass of opinion about him, the hundred and more editions of him on the shelves of the British Museum and the Bodleian, or by the scholarliness of so many of his fans, trying, over a century and a half, to fit him into some pretty fantastic pigeon-holes, but simply by the fact that he had fans at all. That thousands of people, over a long period of time, should have taken not only an interest but a delight in such of a country parson's trivialities as "cut 100 cucumbers. Sweet autumnal weather. Hardly here and there a wasp to be seen. Mr. Richardson came. Mr. Richardson left us. Water cresses come in. Cut 158 cucumbers" &c., &c., would have seemed to him, I think, both an incredible and a touching thing.

A pre-occupation with trivialities is by no means the whole of White, but I do not think I am alone among his fans in saying that it would be a nice problem to have to choose between the value of the famous observations on earth worms and the charm of such an entry as: "On this day Mrs. Clements was delivered of a boy, who makes my nephews and nieces again 57 in number. By the death of Mrs. Brown and one twin they were reduced to 56." There have been innumerable, and I think for the most part unfortunate, attempts to catalogue White, and Mr. Massingham speaks in terms of appropriate doubt of "critics with scientific interests like Grant Allen, Warde Fowler, Mr. Walter Johnson and Mr. E. M. Nicholson (who) are very apt to speak of Gilbert White's discoveries of some of Nature's secrets as 'anticipations,' as though he were a kind of John the Baptist who prepared the way for revealed truths, the immutable and apocalyptical gospel of our own times." It does not seem to have occurred to many critics that White's immortality rests, not solely, but very largely, on White's humanity. Before anything else, he is intensely human: a great gossip, a lover of trifles, an insatiable pryer into the affairs of man and nature, a sort of charming busybody, an intelligent but fallible observer of the everyday life of wood, field and village, a warm-hearted man who loved keeping bees and pigs and took absurd delight in the prodigal numbers of both his cucumbers and his relations. In short, dare I make the heretical suggestion that White did what he did for fun? What he set down, whether hastily or carefully, with delicious impressionism or admirably informed detail, is alight with the personal joy that arises from something done for pure love and curiosity. White might have been astounded by the fact that he had fans; he would have been shocked by much of the critical gas given off for his benefit by a century and a half of editors.

This being my point of view, I feel that the best edition of White should be simple, honest-to-God, uncluttered by editorial doctrine, pruned where necessary, its marginalia reduced to a minimum. In this respect I can find no quarrel at all with the Nonesuch-Massingham combination. Lovely and dignified and satisfying though they are, these two volumes give the impression, as the best Nonesuch work has done in the past, of the man being greater than the edition. In no case more than White's could this have been a happier feeling. Nonesuch have rightly made a book for Selbornites, not bibliophiles, and they have my gratitude. H. E. BATES.