

# Passage to Egypt

**"Revolution and Roses," by P. H. Newby** (Knopf, 261 pp. \$3.50), is a comic novel of the Naguib-Nasser revolt which deposed King Farouk.

By Carlos Baker

WHEN Elaine Brent, the British heroine of P. H. Newby's second Egyptian novel, "Revolution and Roses," arrives in Alexandria one sultry morning, she learns that the Naguib-Nasser revolution has just begun. Like any proper English newspaperwoman, though she is on vacation and even lacks an Egyptian visa, she delicately scents the possibility of a world scoop: a report on the revolution from inside Cairo, maybe even an interview with King Farouk. So she jumps ship, bypasses a thoroughly demoralized custom house, and climbs into the rickety caboose of a long train of events, chiefly farcical. Before she reaches the locomotive which bears her home to London, she has been immersed in sea water, been fed cold chicken in an Alexandrian villa, been insulted by a gloriously wounded Egyptian lieutenant, had her hair washed and waved in a Cairo beauty

shop, and (after some few delaying actions) has gained a husband. What more, one might ask, could the desultory hammock-reader desire for a midsummer night's entertainment?

Well, to be frank, the reader might be justified in asking for more form and less formula. Mr. Newby is by now perhaps too much aware that his work has been happily compared with that of E. M. Forster. One of his characters, late in the present novel, even quotes from "A Passage to India." In this latest passage to Egypt, furthermore, he seems a little too obviously to be seeking to repeat the remarkable—and deserved—success which he scored in 1955 with "The Picnic at Sakkara." "The Picnic" carried the conviction of something experienced at first hand. Indeed, Mr. Newby once taught English literature at what used to be called King Fouad I University in Cairo. But "Revolution and Roses" has the air of something trumped up out of the whole cloth, which is to say out of slightly yellowed newspaper clippings and an active imagination.

The theme of the two novels is much the same. It might be summed up about as follows: East is East, West is West, and though the twain are meeting much more frequently these days, there is still ample room for misunderstanding. "The Picnic" pointed up the problem through the friendship of Edgar Perry, a British professor, and Muawiya Khaslat, an ebullient and unpredictable Egyptian student whose membership in the Moslem Brotherhood was at odds with his admiring respect for his English friend.

In the present novel, Newby dramatizes the conflict through a triangle. Its indices are Elaine Brent, unmarried at thirty and somewhat worried about it; Lieutenant Mahmoud Yehia, a handsome young officer in the Egyptian army whose pleasant duty it is to capture Elaine; and Tim Blainey, a rather colorless young English writer ten years Elaine's junior who, to speak plainly, is never in the running. An armful of yellow roses from Lieutenant Yehia is enough to foment a revolution in Elaine's way of life. And so it does, while young Tim never achieves a higher stature than that of a good-natured go-between. Muawiya was a far more complex character than Lt. Yehia, and Edgar Perry struggled



—Deste.

P. H. Newby—"puppets with a purpose."

much more valiantly against the mysterious Middle East than Elaine Brent ever has to do.

"We love you, but get out and leave us to our own devices." This, in effect, was what Muawiya said to Perry in "The Picnic." The present remake glosses over the problem with a somewhat incredible East-West romance. Egyptian nationals and British colonials still retain their pleasant air of frenetic illogicality. Yet against the revolutionary background, the new personae tend to seem simply awkward and bloodless, like puppets with a purpose.

**THE CONTESSA'S RETURN:** A veteran storyteller, Frank Swinnerton knows how to mix the elements of mystery, violence, and domestic life into a tale full of surprise and revelation. In "The Woman from Sicily" (Doubleday, \$3.75) he has told a psychological murder tale with overtones of irony and a deft analysis of character.

The scene is the East Anglian town of Prothero, a mellow, leisurely, self-contained market town, half isolated by tidal creeks and marshes, which Mr. Swinnerton chats about in a frankly old-fashioned way. The time is 1910, and in the household of Mary Reeves Grace all is quiet and secure. Happily the elder Mrs. Grace, "the Contessa," has gone to Sicily, land of love and hatred, where people are alive and tempestuous. On the strength of her black hair and darting eyes she claimed to be half-Italian, and she scorned the pallid wife of her only son.

Four years later, in the summer of 1914, the even tenor of the Grace life is abruptly broken when a strange woman calls at the law offices of Barraway and Grace. Immediately afterward dire old Barraway disappears and Jerome Grace falls into an abstracted melancholy. When Barra-

(Continued on page 37)

## FRASER YOUNG'S

### LITERARY CRYPT NO. 734

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 734 will be found in the next issue.

IS PONI PLS'C

UNLFTSLPDHN GTU CYN

FNTFHN AYT

DNHPNQN PS PC.

OTS EIUKBPL.

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 733

Fame, like a wayward girl, will still be coy to those who woo her with too slavish knees.

—KEATS.

# The Saturday Review

Editor: NORMAN COUSINS

Publisher: J. R. COMINSKY

Associate Editors: HARRISON SMITH, IRVING KOLODIN

Assistant Editor  
ELOISE PERRY HAZARD

Poetry Editor  
JOHN CIARDI

Editors-at-Large  
HARRISON BROWN  
JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH  
WALTER MILLIS  
ELMO ROPER  
JOHN STEINBECK  
FRANCIS HENRY TAYLOR

Chairman, Editorial Board  
HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

Feature Editor  
PETER RITNER

Science Editor  
JOHN LEAR



Book Review Editor  
RAYMOND WALTERS, JR.

Editorial Production  
DOROTHY CHADBOURN

Contributing Editors  
CLEVELAND AMORY  
JOHN MASON BROWN  
HENRY HEWES  
JAMES THRALL SOBY  
HORACE SUTTON  
JOHN T. WINTERICH

Associate Publisher  
W. D. PATTERSON

Contents Copyrighted, 1957, by Saturday Review, Inc.

## The Atlantic Idea

**I**T USED to be that this country sat aloof and disdainful from "Europe's quarrels"—by which was meant, more generally, almost anything that went on in the world outside our borders. In the two world wars of this century the United States, in the beginning, had only one desire—to stay clear of war, despite the pleas of England and France that we cast our lot with them. Today we find a total reversal of this whole situation. In England and France there now exists a large and bitter anti-American sentiment. And it is in America, now, that the need for alliances in this world is almost universally recognized.

This new situation is made abundantly clear by the answers to a question we asked not long ago of a cross-section of the American public. Our relations with England and France were badly strained when these two nations, without consulting us, began their ill-starred Suez adventure. We were outraged at their breach of the international peace. They were outraged that we did not instantly throw our weight with them against "that Hitler of the Middle East, Colonel Nasser."

Ever since then the alliance of those Western powers, which twice in this century has preserved the freedom of the Western world, has been under a heavy and dangerous strain. Does the American public understand and care? The answer is—it does.

Here is the question we asked and the answers we received:

Last year's crisis over the Suez Canal and the Middle East caused a great strain between the U.S. and its allies, England and France.

Do you think it *essential* that we get this alliance fixed up, or merely *desirable*, or do you think it really *doesn't matter* whether we get it fixed up or not?

Essential we get alliance fixed up .....	66%
Not essential, but desirable .....	18%
Really doesn't matter .....	9%
Don't know .....	7%
	100%

It is hard to remember when any political question got such strongly positive answers, or when the undecided formed so small a part of the total. The American public is very clear in its understanding that the absolute first duty of our foreign policy is to preserve the ties that bind us to our fellow democracies of Europe.

In recent months Europe has been moving ahead toward a new cohesiveness of its own with the formation of a common market and an atomic energy pool. The economic benefits of these moves promise to be great. What is the role of the United States in these developments? Is it enough for us to stand by, pleased and encouraging, giving our blessing to the new turn of European events? Should we welcome Europe as a potential "third force" in the field of world power? Should we assume that we could lose nothing and stand only to gain from the changing structure of Europe? I don't think we can make that assumption. In fact, I think we are making a great mistake if we do.

There are two obvious dangers. One is that there might again someday be an unfriendly Germany which might

come to dominate an economically unified Europe; the other is that Europe itself, newly confident of its united strength, might become rigidly neutralist or even unfriendly to us.

But there is another point of view from which we can look at these new developments of the European idea. Let us agree that it is a good idea, but then let us ask whether there is an even better idea. I think there is. I think if we will free our minds for a minute we will see that all the advantages and none of the disadvantages of the European idea would obtain if we expanded it into an Atlantic idea. With the United States on the outside, there will always be at least the risk that European power—or trade—can be turned against us. With the United States itself drawn closer into this common trading area, we can share in the benefits of an integrated economy.

As we moved closer to Europe economically, there would be an inevitable tendency to move closer politically. The administration of the closer economic relations would require closer integration of each government's policies. We already have the beginning of joint military planning. The benefits of coordinating our economic policies are substantial. Political and diplomatic coordination or integration by some means or other would be expected to follow. I believe this would be a development which would be of great benefit both to Europe and ourselves.

**F**OR better or worse, we are bracketed with Europe in the eyes of the rest of the world, and much will depend on whether we make it a fortunate or injurious bracketing. We can win the world's friendship only through the good example we set—in the just and humane relations we establish within our countries and with the rest of the world outside. Unlike the Communists, we cannot bypass the normal channels to good will by subversion and infiltration, conscienceless propaganda, and ultimately, if the circumstances seem propitious, the use of military force. True, we have our wealth, but we are too intelligent to suppose that, in the long run, purchased friendship would be much of a bulwark against the hatred of oppressed, perpetual "have-not" peoples.

To put it in the simplest terms, if we established closer economic and political ties with Europe we would be richer and stronger and better able to win the struggle for survival our country and our civilization are now fighting in various degrees of cold, hot, and lukewarm war.

—ELMO ROPER.

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## MISS MONROE FOR OUR MOVIES

HOLLIS ALPERT is all wrong about Otto Preminger and his "Saint Joan" (SR June 29). Alpert is concerned about art and Mr. Preminger about money. The film industry is a business and not an art form, and we would get few such reviews if SR would understand that. For the people who want Shaw as he is written go see the play or read it. The mistaken idea that Hollywood wants to make art is the cause of all the howling and laments, and it is time the facts were put right.

Mr. Preminger is spending someone's money and he has to get it back, and a lot more. He is well aware, I'm sure, that "Saint Joan" is a great play, but also that the name Shaw is box-office. "Saint Joan" as a film theme has died three times, and there ain't a dime in her at the box-office. But Shaw will sell. The Catholics don't like the play. So you get a Catholic writer to get a seal of purity by rewriting Shaw. Great acting on the screen doesn't bring in the money, but publicity does, sometimes. Nobody in his sane mind is going to run a four-hour picture in his theatre, unless it's by DeMille, so you have to cut it down.

What Mr. Preminger has made is a fine this-year's model, all shiny and full of horsepower to make an honest buck. Shaw talks too much anyway, and what he says makes people think. Did you ever try to think with your mouth full of candy and trying to hold a girl's hand? Words are dangerous things. But real water and battle-scenes and burning a girl with real fire are something anyone can enjoy, especially in full color and wide screen.

I haven't seen Mr. Preminger's "Saint Joan." I am reading Gibbon's "Decline and Fall" all this season. If I can rework it to fit Sophia Loren and Kirk Douglas I know where I can sell it for a motion picture. Hollis Alpert must go. May I put forward the name of Marilyn Monroe as your next film critic? She writes like a mink.

STEPHEN LONGSTREET.  
Beverly Hills, Calif.

## BARBADOS IN DECLINE?

JEROME BEATTY writes well of Barbados (TRADE WINDS, SR June 29), which is, or was until a year or two ago, one of the few places left in the Caribbean area not impregnated with American cultural and economic poison, an island that is still, in the main, British. My information is, though, that it is rapidly going the way of Jamaica, the Bahamas, and so forth.

MARC T. GREENE.  
Thomaston, Me.

## LET'S FACE FACES

GILBERT SELDES's "America and the Face of N. Khrushchev" (SR June 29) wrings



THROUGH HISTORY WITH J. WESLEY SMITH

"But I've spent a lot of time carving this head—the least you can do is to let me try it on."

applause from this sector. Our anti-Communists seem to be so blinded by their hatred, so intent on continuing a Cold War, and seemingly so desperate for an excuse to make it a hot one, we have wondered if what they don't really need is a psychiatric examination. We can cope with problems if we're willing to face facts. I am glad Mr. Seldes has had the wit and courage to say so out loud.

East Chicago, Ind.

## WHO'S CATTY NOW?

WHILE I AGREE in principle with almost every point that Mr. Ernest Earnest makes in his "The Catty School of Writing" (SR June 29), I cannot subscribe to the means that he uses to make these points. For his churlish diatribe, sensible though it may be in relation to the subject matter, is the very essence of "cattiness"; therefore, the author defeats whatever purpose he may have had in writing the article. Witness the following phrases and quotes from Mr. Earnest's literary homily: "the notorious unwillingness of educated American men to read modern fiction"; Helen Howe's "zoological preoccupation"; "that pretty much takes care of Joyce, Kafka, Proust, Marx, Socrates, Palm Sunday, and the Pope," etc.; "what can one expect of a character named Theodosia?"

Such petulant carping would be excusable, if not expected, except that Mr. Earnest makes the inexcusable mistake of considering Helen Howe, Jean Stafford, Nancy Hale, and Mary McCarthy as important writers—which, of course, they are not.

JOHN N. WILSON.  
Rio Linda, Calif.

## IT WAS CARLYLE

IN "THE CATTY SCHOOL OF WRITING" I find the following statement: "When Emerson heard that Margaret Fuller said that she accepted the Universe, he remarked 'Gad, she'd better.'"

It was Thomas Carlyle who made this remark, not Emerson.

G. PHILIP WARDNER.  
Boston, Mass.

## NO WARM GLOWS

AS EARNEST WRITES, it is almost impossible today to find a witty book by an American writer that approaches a warm glow of humanity. I imagined I found one in Robertson Davies's "Leaven of Malice" a couple of years ago, but even that could not hold up under the scrutiny of a second reading.

ALBERT M. COHN.  
Providence, R. I.

## WHO'S ALIVE?

HAVE YOU STOPPED reviewing all mystery and crime novels? Certainly it is as important an art form as jazz. Even granting that most mystery novels are bad books (which I don't), have you ever considered what would happen to the publishing industry (and you) if only worthwhile books were published? Can you imagine an industry founded on a dozen books a year (or less)?

Get hep, boys; it's the bad books which keep multitudes of printers, publishers, advertising men, agents, typists, secretaries, booksellers, truck drivers, writers, and writers' relatives alive.

WILLIAM CAMPBELL GAULT.  
Pacific Palisades, Calif.