

view of Charles Issawi, by "its intense aridity and its vast oil deposits. Its misfortune is that, whereas the oil seems to be localized, the aridity stretches from one end of the region to the other." With this as the burden of his theme, Issawi presents a competent but non-technical and lively introduction to economic and social problems besetting the Middle East.

George Lenczowski arranges his data on political institutions in a fresh and meaningful manner, although the evaluation suffers from a rigidly constitutional and formalistic frame of reference and the application of Western canons of judgment. Lenczowski's weakness is Bernard Lewis's strength, for this discerning British scholar appraises Middle East institutions in their own historical context, in this case placing Communism and Islam under intense, almost microscopic scrutiny.

But the Lewis chapter raises a question that often vexes collections of this kind. Various pieces in the book have appeared elsewhere in

different guise. Such repeat performances are clearly allowable, for the emphasis here is not on originality but on popularization of scholarly research. Yet, since full attribution has been given in the Lewis article, one can only wonder why the fact was not mentioned that George Sarton's chapter on science in medieval Arab history was also reproduced verbatim, in this instance from the Princeton miscellany entitled "Near Eastern Culture and Society."

This is not a disqualifying objection, however, and neither is the fact that there are some grievous lapses from professional standards of scholarship and lucidity in the article on Middle East oil and the one on education in Egypt. We have here a conscientious, illuminating, and often provocative review of the history and contemporary problems of what is at the moment the most important spot on the globe. The Middle East has been called the cradle of our civilization; if Americans can learn more about the area from books like this,

there may be less chance that it will become the grave of our civilization.

ENGLISHMAN IN EGYPT: Gerald Sparrow's ecstatic report on the "New Egypt" called "**The Sphinx Awakes**" (Putnam, \$4.50) was locked up at the printery midway between President Gamal Abdel Nasser's brave seizure of Suez and Israel's march into Sinai. As a result Mr. Sparrow, a British lawyer and ex-judge on the Bangkok International Court, has been caught with his predictions down.

The judge's judiciousness may be fairly tested by the large number of the conclusions in his book which have already been proved wrong even before publication. He believed, for example, that the Israelis would never be able to locate the Soviet weapons which Nasser was cunningly hiding in the desert. He felt sure that the Egyptian Army, reinvigorated by Nasser's magic, was supremely capable of resisting all attack. He expected Nasser's Arab "allies" to rush to Egypt's aid. All this, of course, was howlingly refuted last November when the Israelis captured virtually the entire Sinai peninsula in four days and not a single Arab outside Egypt fired a shot.

Judge Sparrow stints his praise of all things Egyptian only when they rub up against things British. Thus his sole complaint against Nasser's feeble educational "reforms" is that they have cut down the teaching of English as a second language. Otherwise, Mr. Sparrow clings to the resolution, taken on his first night in Cairo, "to base my book, in so far as I could, on Egyptian information and contacts." His dithyrambic survey of Egypt's dubious progress in land reform, economic development, political virtue, and other internal problems relies almost textually on yards of Cairo handouts. His analysis of the Egyptian-Israeli dispute comes straight from Arab League pamphlets.

For a learned jurist, the judge is swayed by remarkably slim evidence. His main point—that the West must eventually reckon with a mighty Arab Federation "under the guiding star of a resurgent Egypt"—springs bodily from Nasser's own feverishly self-revealing "Testament." Judge Sparrow (like Nasser) sees Arab unification as inevitable because of similar language and religion. He ignores the myriad cleavages which have so far prevented even the internal unification and stability of a single Arab state. He is entirely unaware that the one factor which might really make an Arab colossus inevitable would be the West's continued appeasement of its shadow.

—HAL LEHRMAN.



—Bettmann.

Arabian Library, c. 1000 A.D.

A Mid-East Bookshelf

EGYPT'S LIBERATION: A Philosophy of the Revolution. By Gamal Abdul Nasser. Public Affairs Press. \$2. These three essays, originally written in 1953 as magazine articles, reveal—especially the last chapter, which presents the case for Egypt's expansionist program in Africa as well as in the Arab and Muslim worlds—how the Egyptian dictator has since hewed to the line.

THE IDEAS OF ARAB NATIONALISM. By Hazem Zaki Nuseibeh. Cornell University Press. \$4. A useful and sys-

tematic study, long overdue, of the ideological premises of Arab nationalism, drawing heavily upon original Arabic materials but somewhat aridly related.

THE PAKISTANI WAY OF LIFE. By I.H. Qureshi. Praeger. \$4. A stimulating cursory introduction to manners and institutions in this divided land of a divided subcontinent by a former Minister of Education and current visiting professor of Islamic History at Columbia University.

DE LESSEPS OF SUEZ. By Charles Beatty. Harpers. \$4.50. A vivid and timely, if not always accurate, biography of the creator of the Suez Canal Company.

ISRAEL AND THE UNITED NATIONS. Prepared by a study group of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Manhattan Publishing Co. \$3. A penetrating analysis of the state's evolving policies at the United Nations within the larger context of Israel's international politics.

TURKEY IN MY TIME. By Ahmed Emin Yalman. University of Oklahoma Press. \$4. An informal and personal narrative of Turkey's revolutionary transformation in the past half century by one of its closest observers, an American-trained journalist.

—J. C. HUREWITZ.

FICTION

The Insidious Superman

"The Master," by T. H. White (Putnams. 256 pp. \$3.50), is a fantastic tale of two children held prisoner by a set of mad scientists, the chief of whom has an intellect so lofty he is unable to think, much less speak, in English.

By Basil Davenport

THE publishers of T. H. White's new book "The Master" hint on the jacket that they may risk a comparison with "Treasure Island"; and while no man should be held responsible for his blurbs, Mr. White's own dedication, to a monogram which can be read as R.L.S., suggests that "Treasure Island" was indeed his inspiration. Certainly, it is more nearly an adventure story than anything else he has given us: a boy—with a twin sister, this time—kidnapped and held prisoner on a remote and rocky island where they discover that they have blundered into the midst of a vast and mysterious conspiracy. It is a promising idea; but what is to be the nature of the menace? What is the mid-twentieth-century equivalent of pirates? Mr. White has answered himself by saying, "Mad Scientists!" By this decision Mr. White has committed himself to writing what is at least a form of science fiction.

Now science fiction has many forms, some of them (and those not the worst, as I have publicly maintained) having a good deal more to do with fantasy than science; still, if your villain is using "vibrators" whose effect is first to produce various minor disturbances and ultimately to annihilate all matter within range—if you are going to write anything which makes as much of even hypothetical physics as that, you ought to know enough science to avoid gross errors. Mr. White makes fun of an imaginary issue of *Life* magazine showing a scene in outer space with "men in rubber suits blowing themselves hither and thither with compressed air, regardless of the fact that there was no air to blow against."

There is also the fact that Mad Scientists, like Bug-Eyed Monsters, are a good deal out of fashion in present-day science fiction. But that could be overcome by a writer of genius, and Mr. White has very nearly done so, by the sheer audacity of his

conception. His particular villain, the Master, is 157 years old. He has made some discovery, incomprehensible to us common mortals, about the identity of time, space, and matter; and his intellect is so lofty that he has long found it almost impossible to think, and therefore to speak, in English. He used to be able to speak Chinese, since it is not a noun-verb language; but for years now he has been able to think only in the language of mathematics. Only when he has drunk enough to set most men babbling can he utter a pithy phrase, probably in Latin. That is what a super-scientific villain ought to be!

And yet for a good part of his 157 years he has been planning to make himself dictator of the world, hollowing out a desert island and filling it with his vibrators; and yet it is only when he has launched his threat and started his vibrators going, in low gear, that he comes across the problem, which he has never considered, of how he is to receive the submission of the world's governments and peoples and what he is to do with it when he gets it. Surely we are entitled to expect a little more foresight than that! Another difficulty is that, like Superman in the funny papers, the Master is so powerful that nobody can oppose him, and there can be no real suspense. At just one point the boy-hero seems to have found his Achilles's heel, and we think we are going to see Jim Hawkins in the apple barrel; but the boy is baffled by what, coming when it does, can be called a pure accident. In the end the Master is overthrown by another accident.

IT IS a pity that the structure of the book is so weak, for many of the scenes and characters are filled with Mr. White's inescapable charm and humor. The Master's sanctum, hollowed out of the living rock, and furnished like a London house in the Eighties ("The top visiting-card read Mr. and Mrs. Charles Darwin") is a delicious invention. The children and their dog are winning. And the temporarily frustrated naturalist in Mr. White comes out in some superb pictures of sea-birds. Since its charm is obvious, and its weaknesses need a little analysis, it will probably be a success with children; and if so, it will be in excellent company.



T. H. White—"audacity of conception."

Puritan Romance

"The Dark Stranger," by Dorothy Charques (Coward-McCann. 352 pp. \$3.95), is the story of Mistress Elizabeth Devize and her growing attraction to a young Captain in Cromwell's army.

By Edmund Fuller

THE troubled England of Cromwell's Protectorate is the background of Dorothy Charques's new novel "The Dark Stranger." The book is of the superior order in the historical field. It carries a romantic plot of great charm, restraint, and appeal, nicely held in balance with a story rooted in the political and religious strife of the time.

Mistress Elizabeth Devize is the daughter of a man who had died fighting in Cromwell's Parliamentary army. Now she is compelled to live with her aunt, Dame Alys Cuttler, a fanatical Royalist whose calculating hatred of all that touches Puritanism, Parliament, or Cromwell, appears to have no bounds. It is whispered of Dame Alys that she practices black arts.

The novel seems to me to be poorly named, deriving its title from a peripheral aspect. Elizabeth is conscious of the occasional presence in and about the home of her father, Cherryburn, of a dark stranger, who is too much the "heavy" of this plot, and by that token the least real or inter-