

When Egypt Ruled the East

By George Steindorff
and Keith C. Seele

The fascinating story of the ancient splendor of Egypt, the nation that holds the spotlight of the world in today's news. Here is the enthralling story of an incomparable epoch of the ancient world — kings and conquests, gods and heroes, the art, sculpture, poetry and architecture of one of the most brilliant periods of human culture. Completely revised to include findings from recent archeological discoveries, \$5.75.

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the lost people, the underground people, tramps. . . " The next book was a report commissioned by a left-wing book club on conditions among the coalminers, "The Road to Wigan Pier"; it is suffused with horror of the world of the proletariat, and at the same time with a violent esthetic distaste for Socialists as not being proletarian enough. Orwell took a terrible complexity down with him into the depths. The two personal-history books are ravaged by confused passions, but they give the reader a sort of splendid access to the writer. The two novels are not successful novels, but one of them has a strong vision of the victims of the System and a strong feeling for the poetry of freakishness—rather like Nelson Algren—and the other contains some of the most intelligent writing about class feelings ever done in England.

The third mood was the rediscovery of England, and it began, curiously enough, in Spain, where Orwell had gone to fight for the Loyalists. He admired the Communists; then he saw the Communists; then he saw the moral dangers of political doctrines and of class loyalties based on doctrines; and in the destruction of the Anarchists of Barcelona he saw how the romance of powerlessness really ends. "Homage to Catalonia" is a haunting farewell. In this mood, he began to love what England had been. First, he wrote the elegiac novel "Coming Up For Air," in which, contrasted with the doomed but adorable past, the present and future of England are bleakly sketched amid the "hate-world, slogan world. The coloured shirts, the barbed-wire, the rubber truncheons. The secret cells

where the electric light burns night and day and the detectives watch you while you sleep. And the processions and the posters with enormous faces. . . " Then the coming of the war and the joining of the battle to hold back the hate-world made him suspend his pessimism, and in "The Lion and the Unicorn" he turns again on the English left-wing intelligentsia who "take their cookery from Paris and their opinions from Moscow" and who had sniggered away the morale of Great Britain: "There is little in them except the irresponsible carping of people who have never been and never expect to be in a position of power."

The fourth mood was tension. The War eddied into one calamity after another. Orwell's pessimism began to clamor in his nerves again. H. G. Wells said something optimistic, and Orwell rounded on him, as a Victorian sciolist. The Nazi slogan-world attacked the Communist slogan-world, and the British intelligentsia suddenly became very patriotic. Orwell wrote "Animal Farm," putting his solemn warning in nursery-tale form so as to slip it past the emotional censors of the war-efforters. Orwell's first wife died, and he was lonely. The critical essays of these years show an agonizing ambivalence—not the conscious tension of Shakespeare or Sir Walter Scott or Joyce Cary, but the subconscious tension of Milton or Dostoevski. Orwell was a kind of inverted Dostoevski. Dostoevski had made his terrible leap from his liberal-revolutionary circle to a mood of Holy Reaction. While waiting for the firing squad in Semenov Square, he ceased to see as a convicted subversive and began to see as a judge, yet he never ceased to hear the tiny, unnerving melody of the Petrashevsky Circle; and it is this involuntary dialectic that makes Dostoevski's work uncanny. Orwell started with the judges, and made his leap to the natives and the victims and the morally maimed, but he never ceased to hear Kipling. And now he could say of Kipling that he had "at least tried to imagine what action and responsibility are like." In Orwell's involuntary dialectic, he hates the brutal potency of the man of power, and admires the man who has done the hard thankless thing.

The fifth mood was an unforgiving realization of the inadequacy of man. After Orwell had scolded Wells, Wells recanted a lifetime of hope and died believing that our species is not equal to the demands of its own history. Orwell wrote "1984" and died in that same dark church.

It is difficult to answer him; but in part it is possible to answer him by pointing to him.

FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT NO. 718

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 718 will be found in the next issue.

BC LRB SM R WZYCKOSXF SB

WSM YEFRMQOFM.

VCWBMCB

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 717

Every absurdity has a champion to defend it.

—GOLDSMITH.

Fiction

Continued from page 18

midwife on a tiny Norman village. Suzette Quimpernay, a plumpish widow of twenty-five, is capable, kind, devoted to her calling, and exceedingly pretty. It is this last quality that arouses the suspicions of the naturally suspicious housewives. Good men (or any men, for that matter) are scarce in Pont Clery, and who knows what will happen if a nubile obstetrician is allowed to pedal her bicycle where she will, delivering babies and adding heads wherever she goes? Already the men of the town are evincing an unaccustomed interest in childbirth; blasé husbands boil quantities of unwanted water and are continually underfoot during delivery, instead of seeking moral courage at the corner cafe. So the local ladies form an interesting cabal designed to remove Suzette from their midst; suffice it to say that Aristophanes had a word for it.

The result of these restraining measures is quite delightfully disclosed by Miss Sandstrom.

—M. L.

ROGER THURSBY, Q.C.: Some years have passed in the life of Roger Thursby, barrister, since we met him in Henry Cecil's novel "Brothers in Law," that delicious legal tale of the life and loves of a junior at the English bar. Now—as Mr. Cecil reports in "Friends at Court" (Harper, \$3)—Roger is about to take silk, thus to become Queen's Counsel, with the hazards implied, and to propose marriage to the daughter of the Chief Constable of Carpsire. At this juncture, he is briefed to defend a pair of hotel keepers who are charged with bribery of a British cop to wink at certain minor regulations.

Poor Roger is required to embarrass his girl's father, to deal with a range of pawky, implausible Dickensian characters, and to win his case only on appeal. The spirit of fun with British legal procedures, typified by W. S. Gilbert and A. P. Herbert (whose "Uncommon Law Reports" comes instantly to mind), pervades this treatment. In these terms, "Friends at Court" is a welcome return to familiar terrain.

Unluckily, in growing older, more skilled and assured, poor Roger is less amusing. The terrors of British nose and whiskers no longer strike in him

that dumb admiration which so bemuses us poor country cousins of the American bar. —ELEAZAR LIPSKY.

DULY NOTED: "Wife to Henry V," by Hilda Lewis (Putnam, \$4), explores the life of Catherine of Valois, "born of a wanton and a lunatic" who ruled fifteenth-century France. As consort to Henry of England she was obliged to take second place to his military adventures in France and on his death was left to endure a frustrating existence. An imaginative reconstruction

of Anglo-French history on the eve of modern times and of Catherine's inner turmoil.

"I, Madame Tussaud," by Sylvia Martin (Harper, \$3.95), is the fictional testament of Anne Marie Grosholtz, a determined lady who took death masks of heads that rolled under the guillotine during the French Revolution, abandoned her fussy-duddy husband, and found fame in London through her wax museum. An entertaining blend of history and personalia. —S. P. MANSTEN.

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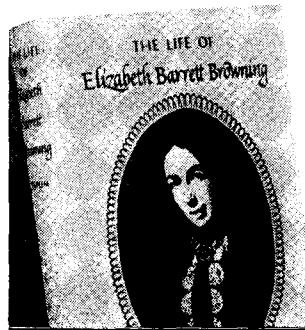
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