

Stone-Age Men of the Kalahari

"The Heart of the Hunter," by Laurens van der Post (Morrow. 268 pp. \$4.50), pleads for the preservation of a gentle South African race now nearing extinction. John Barkham is a writer, lecturer, and long-time observer of African affairs.

By JOHN BARKHAM

WHEN I was a boy in South Africa, the Bushman of the Kalahari was regarded as the lowest form of human life, just a cut above wild animals. Some of the farmers, mostly Afrikaners, along the Kalahari border did indeed look on Bushmen as no better than animals, a nuisance in the wild state and untrustworthy when used as servants. Many were the tales then current of Bushmen tracked down in the desert by trigger-happy hunters.

In recent years all this has changed. Thanks to the books of such writers as Laurens van der Post (an Afrikaner resident in Britain), Elizabeth Marshall Thomas (an American), and others touched by the plight of the Bushmen, we are beginning to see these hunted and harried people for what they are—the remnants of a gentle, harmless race who once roamed across all of Southern Africa until driven by human enemies, black as well as white, into the remotest fastnesses of the Kalahari Desert. Only there, where few can follow, are they safe.

Today even *apartheid*-minded Afrikaners are changing their traditional attitude to the Bushmen, probably because so few are left. The Afrikaner bears a heavy responsibility for their virtual extirpation. Just how heavy, you may see in this new book by Laurens van der Post, the second of his reports on his venture into the interior of the Kalahari in 1957. What he saw there of the Bushmen stirred his pity, aroused his indignation, and—most of all—heightened his sense of collective guilt. He makes no effort to conceal these emotions in his book, and, indeed, they do him credit. The white man has much to answer for in his treatment of the Bushmen.

Mr. van der Post notes scornfully that scientists regularly come to the Kalahari to examine the Bushman's physique, study his family relationships, test his tracking ability, and so forth.

But no one seems to care about the living man himself, who is older than any ruin or relic. When a Bushman kills certain antelope to eat, he is punished for hunting "royal game." Who, asks the Bushman bitterly, punishes the white man? Who, indeed?

Why, demands the author passionately, can't we value people for what they are instead of for what they can be used? From the point of view of his value to the white man, the Bushman is admittedly the most useless of human beings. He owns nothing, builds nothing, has no written language, and knows only what his senses convey to him. But Bushmen have no crime, no hidden tensions; the old love the young, the young respect the old. Whatever each possesses belongs to all.

Contact with the white man, however, is lethal to the Bushman spirit. Van der Post explains this by saying that they look on us as gods because

of the immense power we command. "Either they feel it impossible to be themselves in our presence, or they find it so exhausting that they are compelled to rid themselves of us by cunning, force, or running away." The "tame" Bushman who accompanied the expedition seems to bear this out. As soon as the party returned to the desert police post he developed severe psychosomatic symptoms.

THE closing section of the book is devoted to Bushman legends as the author heard them from the little people—legends revolving about nature and the creatures of the desert. They are charming, and well worth adding to our store of primitive mythology. How long the Bushman will survive is hard to tell, since no one knows for sure how many or where they are. Unlike other primitive peoples, they never developed into a nation, but linger on as they have always lived—individuals in extraordinary intimacy with nature.

Mr. van der Post has written an affectionate and moving book about these gentle Stone Age folk, remote and by the world forgot. His plea for their preservation is a *cri de coeur*, but who, in our frenetic twentieth century world, is interested enough to listen?

Your Literary I. Q.

Conducted by John T. Winterich

LIONS ALL OVER

The king of beasts is frequently called on to serve in the titles of novels. Helene Nitzsche of Maquoketa, Iowa, offers a score of such titles and asks you to assign the correct authors. Answers on page 39.

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| 1. Nicole | () "Children of the Stone Lions" |
| 2. Irwin Shaw | () "Albertine in the Lion's Den" |
| 3. John Brooks | () "The Girl Beneath the Lion" |
| 4. Jan Van Dorp | () "A Lion Is in the Streets" |
| 5. Marjorie Lee | () "The Lions Fed the Tigers" |
| 6. Paul Hackett | () "The Place of the Lion" |
| 7. Joseph Kessel | () "The Year of the Lion" |
| 8. Douglas Angus | () "The Day of the Lion" |
| 9. Gerald Hanley | () "The Lion at Morning" |
| 10. Darwin Teilhet | () "The Mask of a Lion" |
| 11. Lane Kauffmann | () "A Law for the Lion" |
| 12. Giose Rimaneli | () "Lion at My Heart" |
| 13. Charles Williams | () "A Pride of Lions" |
| 14. A. T. W. Simeons | () "The Young Lions" |
| 15. Louis Auchincloss | () "The Lion's Skin" |
| 16. Stephen Longstreet | () "The Lions' Den" |
| 17. Adria Locke Langley | () "The Lion House" |
| 18. Harry Mark Petrakis | () "The Sable Lion" |
| 19. Janet Ayer Fairbank | () "A Lesser Lion" |
| 20. André Pieyre de Mandiargues | () "The Lion" |

Eight Characters in Search of an Exit

"The Dark Labyrinth," by **Lawrence Durrell** (Dutton. 263 pp. \$3.95), offering both symbolism and suspense, represents a milestone in the author's artistic journey toward *"The Alexandria Quartet."* George Reavey, poet, critic, and translator, wrote *"The Colours of Memory."*

By GEORGE REAVEY

LAWRENCE DURRELL's most striking achievement to date is his many-faceted *"The Alexandria Quartet"*—that slice of Levantine life, spiced with vivid, sensual colors, and set spinning in relative mobility as though on the pivot of an Einsteinian eye. Even the English characters here have become as exotic as the Alexandrian setting itself, in which every individual is exposed in merciless and unashamed relief, reveling in and revealing each his own idiosyncrasy. But, since Durrell has taken over a decade to arrive at this form of narrative-continuum of four interlocking novels, it is premature as yet to expect from him another such complex of books. In the meantime, we are offered *"The Dark Labyrinth,"* which was first published in London in 1947 under the title of *"Cefalu."*

Leaner, more restrained than the tetralogy, yet a formally intricate novel, *"The Dark Labyrinth"* falls between *"The Black Book"* (1938) and *"Justine,"* the first of the *"Quartet."* In this intermediate novel we are transplanted from postwar London to the island of Crete on what can only be called a voyage of spiritual discovery. In this sense *"The Dark Labyrinth"* assumes a symbolical significance. But, more superficially, the novel can also be enjoyed as an adventure story, the plot of which one has to follow, like Ariadne's thread, without letting go. There is no denying Durrell's deliberate use of certain devices common to the adventure and mystery story. What raises this novel above the genre is the probing of character and the introduction of larger issues—a culture conflict, questions of fate. Thus we become aware of deeper levels of inquiry, of intricate human patterns, artistic exploration of form, and even a subtle message. We begin to realize that *"The*



Lawrence Durrell—an attempt to escape "the English death."

Dark Labyrinth," despite a certain artificiality and some weaknesses, is nevertheless an important link in the chain culminating in the *"Quartet."*

We are mainly involved with eight English characters. Three "foreigners" are added later. The eight, a cross section of English life, are Lord Graecen (poet and archeologist, who also keeps a diary); Captain Baird (traveler, potential novelist, soldier); Campion (an expatriate artist, critical of the English); Miss Dombey (a drifting missionary); Fearmax (a medium in trouble); Virginia Dale (a typist), and the Truman couple (decent and middle-aged). We discover that these characters are suffering in various degrees from guilt, frustration, illusions, and phobias.

But their destinies intertwine. They are brought together by chance and, in some cases, by design (for which Hogarth, a London psychologist, is responsible) on board a ship cruising in the Mediterranean. Landing eventually in Crete, they visit the village of Cefalu, where all of them except Baird (who has a secret mission) penetrate a dangerous labyrinth that is being exploited as a tourist attraction. There seven of them undergo either a fateful or fatal experience when their exit is cut off by a fall of rock. Three local inhabitants help to complicate the plot: two Greeks—Axelos (a cynic) and Abbot John (a monk and wartime guerrilla)—and an aged American, Ruth Adams, who is the sole and isolated survivor of a previous disaster in the labyrinth. It would be a mistake to reveal the plot in any more detail. But it might be noted that, in contrast to the English "tourists," these three characters have a sense of active harmony with the world around them.

Durrell's declared intention in *"The Black Book"* had been to escape from "the English death"; here it is carried out, or at least attempted. The labyrinth swallows up those of "dilute passion." Others gain a new sense of life. It is clear that, at this stage in his artistic journey, the Mediterranean world was for Durrell a symbol of integrated human values. Thus, describing Abbot John, he writes: "Like all Greeks, he was without difficulty able to combine the mystic and the man of action." Here there is no separation, no frustration. Life and art interpenetrate and reflect man's spiritual journey. Integrating awareness makes experience and form indivisible. This would seem to be Durrell's message. In this sense, only those perish in the labyrinth of the souls dark journey who have lost Ariadne's thread—the sense of life-in-art.

Kingdoms

By Jeannette Nichols

YOU have come into this personal childhood
as a visitor comes
holding a newly blocked hat
and polite as policemen are sometimes.

Thine is my kingdom if I let you in.

See, the bushes are low here—
leapable. You are the child I am.
Your hat is useless, so scale it
like a stone on the wind. There is
rushing water we will walk through
and here you must leave your shoes.
Those trees are how the other world is:
far off, tall, and we have no time to climb.