

with Silas Strawn, FDR and Rex Tugwell were pikers! Indeed, one compensating aspect of what I think is this book's bad organization is that Professor Sternsher, by his lavish quotation of contemporary nonsense, makes us realize how demoralized and befuddled the American élite was. Professor Sternsher is in fact unjust to Mr. Hoover, who was a beacon of real if limited common sense compared with most of his fellow Republican leaders.

The account of the role of the Brain Trust, of the early days of the New

Deal when everything, good and bad, seemed possible, is highly convincing. In addition, it makes amusing reading even though one may think that Professor Sternsher trusts too implicitly in the Ickes *Diary* as a source.

Dr. Tugwell certainly deserves this rehabilitation. He was not a mere doctrinaire; he was a victim of the Roosevelt system of divided control and of his own talent for indiscretion. But he deserved well of the Republic.

This book is too long and repetitious, but it is and will remain useful.

ventional upbringing. Unlike most middle-class Victorian boys, he traveled widely with his art-loving parents and, through his mother and aunt, met many distinguished figures, among them, Benjamin Disraeli, whom he greatly admired.

As a young boy, he tells us, he would spend hours sprawled on the floor of the Florentine mansion in which, for a time, his parents lived, eagerly reading *The Arabian Nights*, a book that, more than any other, inspired him to travel east as soon as he could find the means. Not that Layard was in any way a bookworm. At various schools in France and England he had to endure the persecutions of more conventional children who could not understand his love of art, his facility in languages, and his ardently radical politics. In a French *lycée* he was hated as a representative of the nation that had helped to defeat Napoleon, and at his English school the boys called him "Mounseer" and "Frog-eater" because he had lived in France and could speak and read the language well. Under these bullyings Layard gave as good as he got, and on more than one occasion came home with his clothes torn and face bleeding.

His chance to travel east came when, having spent six dull and miserable years in the office of his uncle, a London solicitor, he was invited by another uncle to go to Ceylon. But instead of going the traditional way, by sea, Henry and an equally adventurous friend, Edward Mitford, undertook the journey first by post-chaise as far as Dalmatia and then on horseback through Turkey and across the mountains of Armenia to what are now Syria and Iraq. Parting from Mitford, who continued on to India, Layard remained in the Middle East, traveling alone or with native guides. Though suffering from malaria, frequently robbed and beaten up, he determinedly explored Damascus, Jerusalem, Petra, and Persia, where he had adventurous encounters with the fierce Bakhtiari tribes. Finally he got himself a post under the British ambassador at Constantinople, reporting on conditions in the Middle East, and it was during these journeys that Layard came upon the mysterious Assyrian mounds which, with small financial help, he proceeded to excavate.

The author has traveled in these areas, watched archeological "digs," and done her research well. Any howlers are only minor, e.g., Aylesbury is hardly a "suburb" of London even today, and it is certainly not "a neighbor" of Cheltenham. But, like her subject, Mrs. Kubie writes with a youthful zest and has produced a book which will be enjoyed equally by young people and their parents.

Transport East to Buried Kingdoms

Road to Nineveh: The Adventures and Excavations of Sir Austen Henry Layard, by Nora Benjamin Kubie (Doubleday, 324 pp. \$5.95), tells zestfully of the digs that unearthed the huge winged bulls, the bas-reliefs, and other monuments to the glory of long-dead Assyrian kings. Leonard Cottrell, author of many books on archeology—"The Bull of Minos," "Lost Worlds"—has visited the areas Mrs. Kubie describes, and recently produced, for BBC, a documentary on Layard's life.

By LEONARD COTTRELL

ALMOST unaided, except by a few native workmen, Sir Austen Henry Layard, one of the great pioneer archeologists, excavated the great mounds of Nimrud and Nineveh in Mesopotamia. There he revealed to the world the glories of the long-dead Assyrian kings, men such as Ashurnasirpal and Sennacherib, who up to the time of Layard's discoveries (1845-1851) were known only from the Bible. One other archeologist, the Frenchman Paul Botta, who worked at the mound of Kuyunjik at the same time as Layard, shares the splendor of his achievement. Both were young men, friendly rivals at digging from the Mesopotamian earth the huge winged bulls, the bas-reliefs, and other works of sculpture which, having lain buried for more than 2,500 years, now enrich the galleries of the British Museum and the Louvre. But whereas Botta had liberal help from his government, Layard had to make do on a shoestring budget.

While Nora Benjamin Kubie's book deals only briefly with Layard's later life

in politics and diplomacy (he finished his archeological work when he was thirty-four), it recaptures in enthralling detail the daring, courage, persistence, and, above all, the youthful exuberance of this extraordinary man. One must admit that her most powerful aids in recreating this adventure are Layard's own writings. For the archeologist wrote brilliantly; he could evoke a landscape, draw a character, or reconstruct a dialogue with the skill of a master. In this he was no doubt helped by his uncon-



Statue of Ashurnasirpal II, from the small temple of Nimrud.

Clean Living with Elbow Grease:

In the latter half of the nineteenth century a minister's son named Horatio Alger, Jr., wrote more than 100 books and magazine serials about and for teen-age boys. The plot was almost always the same: a poor but honest newsboy (or bootblack or street musician) goes through a series of harrowing adventures and is ultimately rewarded for his virtue by being transformed into a prosperous young businessman. This formula, so simple and so appealing, resulted not only in huge sales for the books but also in establishing the phrase "a Horatio Alger story" as a synonym for the typically American idea of the poor boy making good through hard work and clean living.

Now along comes John Tebbel with *From Rags to Riches: Horatio Alger, Jr. and the American Dream* (Macmillan, \$4.95), a biography of the author and an evaluation of his work that views this nineteenth-century phenomenon through a distinctly twentieth-century eye. Alger is presented as a lifelong case of arrested development, his emotional experience consisting of two sordid yet comic involvements with women, as well as a long period during which he lived "a kind of existence which was homosexual in nature, if not in fact" at the Newsboys' Lodging House in New York.

In his relish for the dramatic disparity between Alger's moralistic writings and his apparently messy life, Tebbel occasionally seems to be on shaky ground; the details and documentation are fairly skimpy. What is more solid, and more interesting, is his evaluation of Alger's novels, which he finds to be "stilted" and "flat," the product of "shallow imagination" and "melodramatic plotting." What is worse, Alger himself never seems to have been convinced of his own basic premise—that hard work and virtue are the road from rags to riches. In almost every book the hero is suddenly elevated, not by his own actions, but by the appearance of a mysterious stranger or some other incredible coincidence.

Despite this basic inconsistency and a complete lack of literary merit, Alger's books nonetheless attracted and influenced several generations of American boys. The reason is not hard to find. The Cinderella story, in one form or another, has always been irresistible. Our present-day equivalents may be more plausible, and they are certainly better written, but they are direct descendants of Horatio Alger, Jr. John Tebbel has done a creditable job of putting all this in perspective, though there will be some nostalgic readers over forty who will never forgive him for doing it.

—ROBERT STEIN.

Is London Town Falling Down?

Suicide of a Nation? An Enquiry Into the State of Britain Today, edited by Arthur Koestler (Macmillan, 253 pp. \$4.95), claims that class distinctions, public schools, and other outdated institutions are stultifying British life. J. H. Plumb's most recent book is "Men and Centuries."

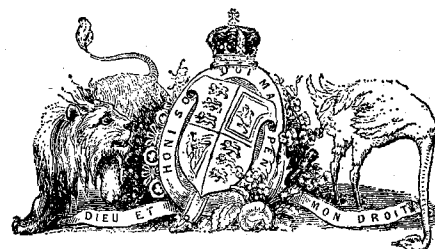
By J. H. PLUMB

POOR old Britain! Her infirmities are mortal, not because cure is impossible, but because, blithely, stupidly, fatuously, her governing élite will never recognize her malady, let alone accept the remedy. She has "class" the way some people have arthritis: her joints are inflamed and so crooked that opportunities slip from her swollen fingers as she limps towards a future of growing immobility and decay.

These physicians of hers, whom Arthur Koestler collected and *Encounter* sponsored—economists, sociologists, psychologists, educationalists, social scientists of every hue from dark blue to flat red—are all agreed on the diagnosis: class divisions, public school (private boarding schools, to you) education, House of Lords, feudal Honours system, Hanoverian court, all cripple her economic and social potential, stultify her cultural life, scientific as well as artistic, and maintain a bogus sense of imperial greatness that is totally out of phase with reality. Sweep 'em all away, and then Britain might have a fighting chance of becoming a second Sweden.

Against this view only Henry Fairlie, the one British political commentator who can, on occasion, stand alongside James Reston, Murray Kempton, and Walter Lippmann and not seem a dwarf, sounds a note of protest, emphasizing wisely the astonishing British achievements since World War II: less poverty, more education, and a better health service than that of any other country of her size in the world; added to which she has allowed herself to be divested of an empire, with less savagery and more tolerance than any empire in the history of mankind. Of course, there is still poverty, a massive need for more schools and better hospitals, and her imperial policy still lacks candor.

Nevertheless, her achievement is



—From the book.

great. Old, arthritic, slow, Britain may be, but there is about her an air of wisdom, and no other country can match her for political maturity. Her House of Commons, medieval institution though it is, can, unlike Congress, pass social legislation of a radical kind; and her political parties can differ without murderous violence. She would never tolerate a statesman as unyielding as Adenauer, as fanatical as de Gaulle, as evil as Franco, or as silly as Nehru; and, although she is unlikely ever to produce a Kennedy, at least in Britain he would not have died. As Fairlie rightly stresses, Britain may be crippled but she is not without virtue.

Yet one cannot write off John Mander, John Vaizey, Malcolm Muggeridge, Andrew Shonfield, and the rest as disgruntled, ill-informed, unperceptive, and ignorant of Britain's true state. Their criticism of Britain's blind, limpet-like adherence to outmoded forms

FRAZER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT NO. 1074

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 1074 will be found in the next issue.

RTZQY RTFM ATC QFYA CLF

YEMFAKF TG CLTSZLC, ESC

CLF FAR TG CLTSZLC.

KLFMCFHCTA

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 1073

We hear and apprehend only what we half know.

—THOREAU.