

virtually nonexistent. To each of his brothers and to each sister's family he left a bequest which, to those unfamiliar with currency exchange rates, sounds rather decent: 10,000 Italian lire. This amounts to \$16.13. To his successor in the Chair of Peter he bequeathed the regal sum of \$80.65.

This, and much else in the book, shows John's simple, evangelical spirit. The spirit certainly was in part congenital. He himself notes, "Above all I am grateful to the Lord for the temperament he has given me, which preserves me from anxieties and tiresome perplexities." But if God gave him virtues, John did not leave them unattended. The young seminarian opens his journal in a spirit of calculated rigor. First comes a quotation from the Council of Trent, reminding the clergy that faults which might be minor in others would in them be great. This is followed by a quotation from the Book of Lamentations: "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." Every week, the diary proceeds, "make your confession and communion, fast on Friday and Saturday, on these days perform some penance on the advice of your Spiritual Father." To facilitate the practice of chastity, he reminds himself to "keep a close watch on your feelings . . . , make a special profession of humility," and remember that chastity and humility "must always be accompanied by the queen of all virtues, charity." "Above all, beware of material interests or desires, or too much attachment to money."

Angelo was young still, but his program was not callow. It drew on vast stores of vicarious experience in the long-standing Christian ascetical tradition. The precepts just cited, for example, come from what is basically a set of Sodality rules, studied through and copied out by Angelo, with some adaptations, in his own hand.

The kind of spirituality evinced here and throughout the *Journal* has come in for its share of criticism. It shows a profusion of regulations, of techniques and contrivances—scheduled examinations of conscience, set times for prayer, constant attention to particular failings, and other minutiae—that will strike some readers as spiritual nit-picking. Is this not human gadgetry, far from the vaunted freedom of the Gospels and of the children of God?

Still, facts are facts. In this day of witnessing, Angelo Roncalli's life witnesses the fact that his kind of ascetical training can produce not constraint but tranquil freedom of spirit. No distraught Jonathan Edwards anywhere here. From his seminary days Roncalli was at ease both with tradition and with novelty, and with their vigorous interaction.

"It will always be my principle, in all
(Continued on page 61)

Ethiopia: End of a Dark Age

Haile Selassie: The Conquering Lion, by Leonard Mosley (Prentice-Hall, 288 pp. \$6.95), offers a portrait in depth of an enigmatic monarch who has continually triumphed over foes that have never really been defeated. Charles Miller is a free-lance writer specializing in African affairs.

By CHARLES MILLER

THE NAME of Haile Selassie usually evokes two memories: his historic (and prophetic) appeal to the League of Nations in 1936, and his gallant but hopeless resistance to Mussolini. These episodes are almost never viewed in their more meaningful context as epilogue to one struggle and prologue to another—both at least as bitter and historically significant as the relatively brief agony of the Italian occupation. That perspective is provided, with sweeping drama and excitement, in Leonard Mosley's *Haile Selassie: The Conquering Lion*.

Ethiopia is one of the most stunningly beautiful lands on earth, a landscape artist's daydream of fabulous multihued lakes, soaring blue-green mountains, bottomless canyons, and grimly majestic desert and lava wastes. And for more than three thousand years these natural wonders have also served as natural barriers, isolating the country from even the most rudimentary knowledge of progress. Tafari Makonnen, the son of an Ethiopian nobleman, was born in 1892, but it might just as well have been in 1492, as he quickly learned when he became one of several claimants to his country's throne. For Tafari was possessed of an abounding desire to improve the lot of his people—an ambition virtually without precedent in a land that had always been ruled, with truly medieval pageantry and bestiality, by a handful of grasping robber barons. And when this rookery of warlords learned that a do-gooder was in their midst, a struggle began that was not to end until Tafari Makonnen became Haile Selassie I.

It would take a score card to keep track of the *neguses*, *rases*, *dejazmaches*, *gerazmaches*, *fitauraris*, *bitawadeds*, *abuns*, *waizeros*, *itchehes*, and other baroquely titled adornments of the Ethiopian nobility, who schemed desperately, over a period spanning thirty years, to block Tafari's accession. That he prevailed, Mosley relates, was due in part to rare personal bravery and talents



—From the book.

Haile Selassie with U.N. Secretary-General U Thant—blocked by *neguses*, *rases*, *dejazmaches*, *gerazmaches*, *fitauraris*, *bitawadeds*, *abuns*, *waizeros*, and *itchehes*.

for cunning that surpassed anything the combined opposition could offer, but mainly to what has always been his supreme virtue: an almost superhuman capacity for waiting. And wait he did—all the while foiling palace intrigues that reduce the Borgias to trainee status, leading troops to battle against the *rases'* private armies, and attending the Babylonian funerals of those adversaries who somehow managed to die natural deaths—until the path was finally cleared for his coronation in 1930. With guts, sagacity, and extraordinary patience, Haile Selassie had been able, in three decades, to break up, at least partially, feudalism's three-millenia stranglehold on his country. Now he could begin (or at least try to begin) the terrible task of dragging Ethiopia out of the Dark Ages.

NOT that rivals vanished when he took the throne. On receiving invitations to visit several European countries, he at first hesitated, uncertain of what might happen in his absence, and finally resolved the dilemma by taking his enemies with him—although Mosley notes that "he left Hapta Georgis behind to look after the Empress and the other *rases*, and Ras Kassa to look after Hapta

Georgis." In fact, a continuing climate of dissension among many nobles did much to help transform the new Emperor's painfully emerging nation into a sitting duck for Mussolini. Even so, the Italian invasion and occupation can be seen today as not very much more obscene than the behavior of the "democracies" in the League of Nations, as they turned deaf ears to Haile Selassie's lonely invocations to that unfashionable abstraction called principle.

Mosley not only places the burden of blame for that wretched interlude on Great Britain's fixation with appeasement, but also tells how, during World War II, England almost managed to lose entirely what remaining credit she held with Haile Selassie, even after British troops spearheaded his return to Addis Ababa in 1941. For immediately on the heels of the liberation came an understandably little-known sidelight of the war: an attempt—engineered by a small but influential coterie of British colonial civil servants—to absorb Ethiopia into the British Empire. This was to be achieved through the systematic destruction of the country's already shaky administrative machinery, with the unspoken purpose of creating the impression that only a "civilized" nation could manage a horde of savages. Although not an instrument of British policy, the plot (there is no other word) was tolerated—or at best ignored—by the British government to the point where it nearly came off. Indeed, if Haile Selassie had not learned how to cope with duplicity from the years of conflict with his own *rases* and *dejasmaches*, he might well have lost his third and greatest struggle, with no telling what consequences for the future of Ethiopia—and, for that matter, all of present-day Africa.

THE author's candor in relating this sorry episode is no less forthright than his appraisal of Haile Selassie. A British journalist who covered the liberation, Mosley freely acknowledges enormous respect and personal regard for the Emperor, but he also paints in the warts. There is no attempt to gloss over the fact that Haile Selassie is an absolute monarch who doesn't hesitate to employ police-state methods when necessary; that he has become disenchanted with the democratic process; and that the slow pace of the reforms he once championed so ardently have alienated him from Ethiopia's younger élite, while squalor and abject poverty continue to run rampant through the land.

But Mosley also makes it clear that much of this apparent reluctance to hasten change is simply imposed on the Emperor by ironbound Ethiopian traditions of status quo that even he hasn't been able to erase. Moreover, the author observes that whatever advances may

have been brought about (and progress is singularly impressive in education, health, and communications) can be attributed almost exclusively to the Emperor's efforts and often to his private pocketbook. Particular notice is taken of Haile Selassie's stature as one of Africa's most respected leaders, not to mention his personal achievement in raising Ethiopia's world prestige. It is no mere accident that both the Organization of African Unity and the U.N. Economic Commission for Africa have their headquarters in Addis Ababa.

Salute to Israel's Grand Old Man

David: The Story of Ben-Gurion, by Maurice Edelman (Putnam. 214 pp. \$4.95), is a "non-definitive" biography of Israel's ex-Prime Minister. Hal Lehrman, commentator on Middle Eastern and North African affairs, wrote "Israel: The Beginning and Tomorrow."

By HAL LEHRMAN

RESISTING the entry into Israel of television, which he judged frivolous and wasteful, David Ben-Gurion is supposed to have remarked: "A nation surrounded by Arabs has no need of cowboys and Indians." A memorable line, worth rejoicing and celebration (though B.G. probably never said it). Incredibly, however, its repetition is the only flash of even minor distinction in *David: The Story of Ben-Gurion*. Maurice Edelman, Labor Member of Parliament, who begins with the promising disclaimer that "this is not a definitive biography," has managed to produce a nonbiography so unerring in its lack of disclosure that it ends in being a non-book.

Israel's ranking "Old Man" keeps fit nowadays by periodic sorties from his Negev retirement, brandishing political and ideological monkey wrenches. But the ex-Prime Minister, an obviously controversial and still pugnacious man, has not been well served by biographers, generally uncritical and hero-worshipful, nor even by himself as historian. (His first memoir, *Israel: Years of Challenge*, which emerged in 1943 from his desert meditations, had a peevish air of implied clairvoyance and personal infallibility.) Edelman admits, in one grudging sentence, the existence of a "growing opposition" which rejects "what they called 'the B.G. myth'" and which claims that, on balance, "liabilities outweighed as-

In short, this is the fascinating portrait of an enigma: a despot in spite of himself, a tyrant who loves his people but dares do only so much for them, an Arthurian monarch who has continually triumphed over terrible foes that he has never really defeated. For an in-depth look at one of the most remarkable personalities of our time—as well as a knowledgeable briefing on a weird and little-known land and, above all, a free-swinging tale of Arabian Nights adventure—Mosley's book simply can't be passed up.

sets." This conceded, the Edelman survey nevertheless embraces the myth entire, detecting no flaw in a long life of partisan battle and bicker.

Worse, the track of that life gets lost in a forest of digressions. Earlier biographers, like Barnett Litvinoff, also British, may have similarly rendered their hero invincible in all encounters. But Litvinoff's Ben-Gurion was at least a hero in three believable dimensions. Edelman, who has written a shelf of intrigue-adventure novels, fails here even in invention; his hero is undimensional and nearly invisible.

The author tips a grateful hat to a list

**David Ben-Gurion and his wife Paula—
"brandishing . . . monkey wrenches."**

—Camera Press (Pix).



SR/April 10, 1965