

# The Other Side of the Case

ASIA AND WESTERN DOMINANCE, by K. M. Pannikar; Allen and Unwin, English price 30/-.

(Reviewed by R. M. Burdon)

"IT must be remembered that we have heard only one side of the case," writes Samuel Butler in his apology for the Devil. "God has written all the books." Since most of the books about Western dominance in Asia have been written by Europeans or Americans it follows that we of the West have heard only one side of the case. The other side is most ably and to some extent impartially presented by Mr. Pannikar in the book under review.

Four and a half centuries ago Portugal combined an attempt to open and develop the spice trade with a movement to outflank the land power of Islam in the Middle East. As Portuguese sea power gave way to Dutch, and Dutch to English, the motives and incentives for Oriental trade underwent a change. Tea and textiles replaced spices as the most desirable cargoes. Then, after Britain's industrial revolution, the Orient assumed a new importance as a market for manufactured goods, and

later as a field for the investment of capital, followed in India by occupation and piecemeal conquest; in China by a system of external pressure which brought about the collapse of that already tottering Empire.

Beginning with Vasco da Gama's arrival at Calicut in 1498, Mr. Pannikar tells the story of Europe's gradual penetration of all the countries of coastal Asia—a story that does not always make pleasant reading for persons brought up to believe that their race has carried welfare and enlightenment wherever its standards have been planted. The East India Company's administration of Bengal during the decade that followed Plassey "was directed to a single purpose—plunder." The trade treaties forced upon China are not readily defensible, and the destruction of the Summer Palace was an act of wanton barbarism. In some cases Christian missionaries relied upon diplomatic pressure and even armed force to maintain their establishments on Chinese territory.

While conceding that the East has derived great benefits from the West Mr. Pannikar passes over the fact that, when they fell victims to European encroachment, the Moghul and Manchu

Empires were rotten structures, ripe in any case for either conquest or anarchy, and, while paying a frank tribute to Britain's administration of India during the latter half of last century, he is guilty of more than one unjust statement. For instance, it is neither fair nor correct to say that in 1845 "an excuse was found to declare war on the Sikhs," when actually the Sikhs themselves provided an unexceptionable excuse by crossing the Sutlej with an invading army. Nor is it just to claim that "the institution of separate electorates for the Muslims (during Lord Minto's viceroyalty) was the first expression of the pernicious two-nation theory, which ultimately resulted in the foundation of Pakistan." The responsibility for partition rests largely with the uncompromising attitude of Congress leaders towards the Moslem league in 1937 and afterwards.

Generally speaking, however, this book strikes me as being of the very greatest importance, appearing as it does at a time when so large a part of Asia is in a state of ferment. The fact of its dominance has imbued the West with a conviction of racial superiority—a conviction of relatively recent growth which is being challenged either actively or passively in every country east of Suez. Until this state of affairs is more fully recognised by American and European statesmen, conflict is likely to endure. Let us recapitulate. "It must be remembered that we have heard only

AIR VICE-MARSHAL SIR ARTHUR NEVILL (below) is to speak about "The Frigate Bird," by Captain P. G. Taylor, in the ZB Book



Review session on March 14. The three other books for discussion the same evening are "The Story of the Kauri," by A. H. Reed (reviewer, A. P. Thomson); "High Noon for Coaches," by J. Holket Millar (Frank Simpson); and "The Lying Days," by Nadine Gordimer (G. E. Stevens).

one side of the case." Mr. Pannikar has made a most commendable attempt to show us the other.

## FIGHTING ON TIMOR

INDEPENDENT COMPANY, by Lieutenant-Colonel Bernard J. Callinan, D.S.O., M.C.; William Heinemann, New Zealand price 19/-.

THE Australians went to Timor in December, 1941, to prevent airfields falling into Japanese hands from which the enemy could bomb the harbour at Darwin, 500 miles away. In Dutch Timor a weak battalion was overrun in four days by 5000 Japanese; in Portuguese Timor the 2/2 Australian Independent Company, 327 strong, a

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