

History Among the Ruins

FROM AN ANTIQUE LAND, by Julian Huxley; Max Parrish, English price 25/-.

(Reviewed by Anton Vogt)

ARMCHAIR travellers usually have to write their own books between the lines of those they read, building dream-worlds on superficial observation and bad prose. But travelling through the Middle East with Julian Huxley as observer and recorder may be more satisfying than going oneself. There is so much he knows about so many things that a grand tour without equivalent company could be an indifferent substitute. He calls the area "solid history," and speculatively restores each ruin to its past magnificence. Countries visited include Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon and Turkey. Places exerting a special fascination include Byblos, Baalbek, Petra, Damascus and Baghdad. Profuse illustrations, including nearly 30 four-colour photogravures, are in exquisite taste. Huxley, in short, lives up to his credo: that it is "one of the duties . . . of men . . . to bear witness to the wonder of the world in which he finds himself," and his publishers have helped him handsomely.

Huxley, who comes to the social sciences from biology, was Director-

General of Unesco when he toured the Middle East. He is inevitably concerned with present and future, even in the arena of man's past. I am sorry that I cannot quote his introduction in full; but I am prepared to assert my agreement with his assumption that "the general aim of history is to record the progress made by various segments of our species in realising human potentialities. . . ." This is the viewpoint from which "the evolutionary humanist . . . prompts the historian to put the facts of history." It is at once less vague than Toynbee's generalisation of challenge and response, and less presumptuous than faith in a millenary goal. In Huxley's words, the questions are these: "How are cultural patterns transmitted and developed? How do new discoveries and new modes of realisation become incorporated in cultural traditions, how are they modified by the political framework of the societies in which they operate? What have been the obstacles to advance, what the new difficulties resulting from each successful step? What are the blind alleys to avoid. . . ?"

It would be altogether too facile to dismiss these questions as the new jargon of the social scientist. As we move towards one world or none, survival for the species depends increasingly on



JULIAN HUXLEY

"To bear witness to the wonder of the world"

asking the right questions. The future, like the past, stands or falls on a hypothesis: that man has some say in his own destiny, if he is man enough to see it.

SYNDICATED CRIME

THE SHAME OF NEW YORK, by Ed Reid; Victor Gollancz, English price 13/6.

ED REID in 1949 was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in journalism for his exposé of a racket shared by the bookies and the police in New York. In *The Shame of New York*, he writes again of this crime syndicate in the city where the police were so corrupt that it was necessary to recruit 40 rookie policemen and segregate them from the main force during their training and the investigations in order to make a clean up. It was at this time that O'Dwyer, Mayor of New York and ex-policeman, was hurriedly appointed Ambassador to Mexico.

Reid also claims to reveal the identity of the city's crime boss; he covers corruption on the Brooklyn waterfront, graft in the building industry and, discussing the Jelke call-girl case, attributes Jelke's sentence to his not being backed by a crime syndicate, and consequently not being able to keep his witnesses lined up.

There is undoubtedly much truth in Reid's "revelations," particularly when they are a direct transcript of court proceedings or testimony before the Crime Commission. But he often wildly expands proven facts. On Thomas Luchese (Tommy or Three-Finger Brown), he says, "There are perhaps fifty firms in New York City area over which Tommy Brown has influence—not to mention hundreds in the garment centre, whose officials are under Three Finger's thumb."

This bar-room hearsay falls rather flat compared with the brand of crusading journalism introduced around the beginning of this century by another New Yorker, Lincoln Steffens.

—J.R.C.

ONE MAN'S OXFORD

OXFORD TRIUMPHANT, by Norman Longmate; Phoenix House, through A. H. and A. W. Reed, English price 16/-.

THE publishers of *Oxford Triumphant* claim for it that, for the non-university man, it "is the next best thing to going to Oxford"; and also, that it is "a documentary." The compatibility of these claims is doubtful; the first concerns itself with experience, and the second with evidence; and in fact Mr. Longmate has tried to produce a documentary.

Drawing upon his five years of active residence since the war, and upon the opinions of his friends, he has applied himself with admirable persistence to reducing the complexity of Oxford to the limits of a very readable two hundred pages. He quotes statistics of academic successes and failures for individual colleges, of graduate unemployment in the unappreciative world outside, and of Oxford's contribution to the present House of Commons. He explains how undergraduates are selected, and how the Fellows and Heads of Houses are elected. He outlines the societies which cater for interests other than the academic. In all this he is lucid, objective, illuminative, almost encyclopaedic. When, however, his evidence ceases to be statistical, one becomes dubious. Of women undergraduates, he gives the proportion with full sexual experience as "at least 1 in 3 and possibly as high as 1 in 2, or even 2 in 3"; these are large limits. He has a kindly word to say of the dons, "many, if not most of them, hard-working and capable men, devoted to the interests of their pupils, amiable, cultured and well-informed." Is one here, strictly, in the realm of fact? And when he reproves "irresponsible deans and bursars, who are unable

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