

BOOKS

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doubtedly brought about changes sooner than they would otherwise have occurred and gave them intelligent direction.

Her grandson's study of her life tends, naturally enough, to be personal, indeed, boringly so for the first 50 pages. But he then surprises the reader with a most competent account of her work, and concludes with a study of her character, less absorbing, perhaps, but valuable.

—Walter Brookes

ANCIENT COMMUNITY

IRAN, by Richard N. Frye; Allen and Unwin. English price 8 6.

CAN the story of an ancient and complex community be told in one hundred pages? Perhaps only by French historiography at its best. This is a well-stored handbook. The enquirer will find in it a tough little paragraph—or at least a firm sentence or two—on almost any subject of importance in Persian affairs, from Zoroastrianism to carpet-weaving, from irrigation to the popularity, in translated European fiction, of Kafka and Sartre. On such a scale little can be made of the real drama in modern Persian history—of oil, for instance, of the ejection of Persia's strong man to succour hard-pressed Russia, and of the present-day conflict of mighty forces.

The threads are indeed tangled, with backward population and explosive

Eastern nationalism confronted at once by a cold war and by a tight-knit international oil industry. The book is primarily addressed to Americans, who are presumed to be vastly ignorant of the world in which their newly-acquired dominant power operates. Its facts are objective, but are naturally sugared by a continuously echoed endorsement of the basic axioms of American policy.

—F. L. W. Wood

VOICES OF AUTHORITY

THE FAITHFUL ALLY, by Eric Linklater; Jonathan Cape. English price 10 6. THE CREEDY CASE, by Edward Crankshaw; Michael Joseph. English price 10 6. DON CAMILLO'S DILEMMA, by Giovanni Guareschi; Victor Gollancz. English price 10 6. THE SIN FLOOD, by Shirley Murrell; Hodder and Stoughton. English price 10 6.

THE European-educated Oriental who scores over humourless British bureaucrats is no novelty in fiction. But Eric Linklater's suavely amoral Sultan of Namua, in his best book since *Private Angelo*, is a lively creation. Exercising only a nominal authority, the Sultan is at odds with the conscientious, but rule-bound adviser, Morland. During an insurrection, when Morland's attempts at sweet reasonableness fail, the Sultan saves the day by force and cunning.

Linklater's gently ironical style is a pleasure to read. Perhaps it is unwise to seek a moral in what is designed as a witty entertainment, but the sugges-



N.P.S. photograph

ERIC LINKLATER

The Sultan saved the day

tion is that government which dispenses with all force digs its own grave. I sympathised more with the harassed Morland than with the Sultan, who, for all his charm, is something of a rogue. And this, perhaps too obviously, is not what the author expects of us.

Edward Crankshaw, too, deals with authority, among the Old-School-Tie buddies of the British Army. Colonel Scoresby, of the War Office, making an

issue out of his belief that a scientific worker, Creedy, is being posted for political reasons, comes into conflict with the privilege-cherishing gang. Unhappily, what promises to be a searching criticism of Army bureaucrats, turns into something of a mare's nest. Crankshaw's expertness in international affairs enables him to depict very vividly the complicated clash of loyalties towards the end of the war. Yet all the characters are almost comically English types—very noble, "civilised," knowing only the Best People, dead-pan about their emotions, and somewhat stupid. It is impossible to become very concerned about them, or to believe that the ideas such characters hold can be important.

In his third collection of episodes in the feud between Don Camillo and the Communist mayor, Peppone, Giovanni Guareschi maintains remarkably consistent form. Those who are not yet tired of the duo, will find *Don Camillo's Dilemma* quite as engaging as its predecessors.

The Sin Flood is smoothly presented melodrama of the woman's magazine kind. As a disastrous double tide on the Essex coast destroys the last evidence of murder and treachery, an old lady, dying, relives her life in the mid-19th Century as the wife of Raphael Raven, tyrant and hypocrite. Fair period and local colour, otherwise totally undistinguished.

—J.C.R.



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