

of the Conquistadors, this time showing how the children of the first generation of mixed Spanish-Indian blood begin to revert to one ancestry or the other. It is exciting reading, a colourful consideration of the problem the child of two races has to face. Although the characters change their names and titles with the speed of characters in a pre-revolutionary Russian novel, it is well worth the effort to keep abreast.

There is no panache or flourish about M. Pierre Boule's *White Man's Test*, translated by Xan Fielding; but its quality is fine and hard. It is the story of a little French girl befriended by Malayan natives when she survived the Japanese invasion; the story of her marriage to one of the village boys and her subsequent "rescue" to be educated in Europe. But Malays, even boys, cannot be trifled with like this, and M. Boule draws up his threads and brings his story to a dramatic and unusual conclusion. Where de Madariaga's book was 19th century drama, this is the 20th century method, and ably handled; it is as good as *The Bridge on the River Kwai*.

September Moon, a romantic novel against a real setting, is a carefully worked out and pleasantly written story with good rural characters (some are caricatures). As in the fairy tales which are guaranteed-safe-for-children, virtue triumphs in a surprising number of places. It is a story of young love, and the setting is Herefordshire in hop-picking time, when the gipsies invade the farms much as a shearing gang invades a New Zealand sheep station. Within the limits of a pleasant, romantic novel the book is successful: the author writes to entertain and it would be curmudgeonly to cavil. —S.P.

EXCAVATIONS

SEVEN CAVES, by Carleton S. Coon; Jonathan Cape, English price 28/-.

MR COON is a man who combines a forceful pen with profound learning, for already to his credit are two of the most notable books available in their own fields: *Caravan*, the story of the Middle East, and *The History of Man*. Here he writes a fascinating account of his excavation of seven notable caves in the Middle East in search of the history of early man. Men today are as interesting to him as the men of a hundred thousand years ago, and so we meet the people who dig for him, who help or hinder his way, who exasperate him with their local prejudices, or delight him with their interest in the work they do for him.

The excitement of digging for treasure is here, but the treasure is knowledge. Coon does not dress this up in the jargon of archaeology, which is rapidly reaching a stage when some purging of its vocabulary is necessary, but makes clear the importance of his finds in simple terms which are none the less exact. One of his most important finds had to be sent out of the Northern Hemisphere for radioactive carbon age determination because atomic bomb explosions there were contaminating the air. He says that the sample was sent to the laboratory at Lower Hutt, Auckland. How the Waitemata grows!

The author is most amusing when he is describing the difficulties he encountered in Persia, because of his name—Coon in Persian means rectum. Telephone operators went into uncontrollable fits of giggles, and serious officials invented cumbersome ways of addressing him. His workmen, however, found it a boon when they wanted to be rude to him. The human interest

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