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The Man Who Burned the White House, Admiral Sir George Cockburn.

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little effort to set the story into the already familiar pattern of the war.

It is tempting to label Halpern "The Marder of the Med," itself no mean accolade and one which does invite some comparisons. Both clearly have produced work of consummate scholarship. Marder gave us his in smaller packages, and he enjoyed the benefits of a much clearer and more limited focus. Halpern could have benefited from these advantages, but that was clearly impossible. Perhaps for that reason Halpern lacks the easy familiarity with his subject, the colorful character sketches and the pithy judgements which were so much a part of Marder's work. Marder, of course, enjoyed the tremendous advantage of being able to interview many of the principal actors in his drama. Halpern, writing a generation later, could not be so fortunate. If it is true that he fails to breathe life into his story in the same way Marder did, Halpern can be credited for the clarity and candor of his style. Whatever the subtle differences in approach and writing, there is little to choose between them.

Halpern fits well into the new wave of historians who seek to fill that enormous void in the historiography of the First World War we have come to describe euphemistically as "peripheral theaters." With this book he has plugged a huge hole, and all scholars and students interested in naval history generally, and the First World War owe Professor Halpern an enormous debt of

gratitude. It will doubtless be some time before the impact of his scholarship is felt in general accounts of the war, but there can be little doubt that that impact will be profound.

MARC MILNER
University of New Brunswick
Canada

Pack, James. *The Man Who Burned the White House, Admiral Sir George Cockburn*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1987. 288pp. \$21.95

This is history imitating art. A young boy from a "good" family joins the navy on the eve of the Napoleonic Wars. He serves well in every post to which he is assigned and is rewarded with rapid promotion. This is George Cockburn (or is it Horatio Hornblower?). What Pack has given us in this biography is the life of a man in which there is virtually no fault, no sin and no blame. Pack has mined the papers of Cockburn and come up with pure ore; no imperfections here.

Pack's one dimensional view of Cockburn may well be the result of confining so much of his research to the Cockburn papers alone. Aside from that treasure he seems to have paid little attention to other unpublished sources. The result is that we see the world through the prism of Sir George Cockburn, not always, one might suggest, an entirely undistorted view. In dealing with the War of 1812, however, and Cockburn's attack on Washington (the

high point of the Admiral's career), Pack is careful to take a balanced view. Indeed, in his description and analysis of the "burning" of the capital, Pack provides a long overdue corrective to the distortions of that event so often found on this side of the Atlantic.

Most naval historians will find little that is new in Pack's description of the wars with France and America. The detailed account of affairs in the Chesapeake provides some insight, from the British viewpoint, of that part of the War of 1812. By far, however, the most interesting portion of the biography are the two chapters detailing Cockburn's role as "Napoleon's Keeper." To Cockburn fell the honor and burden of transporting the fallen emperor (a title by which he could not be addressed—he was called General) to his exile at St. Helena, remaining with him until his relief arrived. Oftentimes sullen, moody and petulant, Napoleon could on the other hand be a most fascinating dinner companion and raconteur. Nevertheless, whatever the pleasure of his company might have been, it soon wore thin and Cockburn was delighted when he was able to put St. Helena over his stern.

If the plot resembles Hornblower, the prose does not. Pack's style relies heavily on quotes, and unfortunately the publisher elected to print them; some of them are quite long. One needs to read carefully to discern between Pack and a quoted source.

Perhaps Cockburn was as good as the author makes him out to be. He did have a distinguished career and

his accomplishments speak for themselves, but this sort of biographical approach verges on hagiography. Instead of a human being, Pack has presented us with an icon.

WILLIAM M. FOWLER, JR.
The New England Quarterly

Fairbank, John King. *The Great Chinese Revolution, 1800-1985*. New York: Harper & Row, 1986. 396pp. \$19.95

John King Fairbank has been the dean of American China scholars since World War II. Now 80 years old and emeritus at Harvard, he has turned out this book as an "exp-professor who is not up for tenure and who doesn't care about reputation." The book has neither footnotes nor bibliography, and it is written in a style neither stuffy nor unsophisticated. Hence, Professor Fairbank has irritated scholars and pedants in much the fashion that his learned but practical advice has irritated national administrations for over four decades.

This may possibly be the best book on China since the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949. Certainly, if an American had only one book with which to brief himself on the Chinese revolution, this is that book.

Fairbank recounts the dramatic history of China over 185 years. Each event he describes might as justly be considered the real beginning of the Chinese revolution as 1 October 1949, when Mao announced that