BOOKS

One by Life, another out of Time

THE WORLD WE LIVE IN
by the Editorial Staff of Life and Lincoln Barnett
Simon & Schuster $13.50

The World We Live In is made up of a series of 13 articles which ran in *Life* at intervals from December, 1952 to December, 1954. Individually, these articles were impressive; collected, they are awesome.

This is, in every way, an overwhelming book. Just to lift it (and children under 5 or adults over 75 should be discouraged from trying) is an experience. As a physical history of the world, it probably has more of everything than any other book on this subject ever had before —more photographs, more artwork, more color pages, more foldout panels. In fact, it's just about the richest dose of popular science ever offered in one container.

The lushness of the book is inclined to obscure the fact that there is some good reading here too, above and beyond the caption material. This text has been written by Lincoln Barnett (*The Universe and Dr. Einstein*), based on material collected by 10 researchers and checked by almost 250 authorities in various branches of science. It is a comprehensive and extremely orderly job of writing. The headings of the 13 chapters describe the scope of the book: The Earth is Born, The Miracle of the Sea, The Face of the Land, The Canopy of Air, The Pageant of Life, The Age of Mammals, Creatures of the Sea, The Coral Reef, The Land of the Sun (deserts), The Arctic Barrens, The Rain Forest, The Woods of Home (forests of the temperate zones) and The Starry Universe.

THE TIME BOOK OF SCIENCE
by Jonathan Norton Leonard
Random House, New York $3.95

As SCIENCE editor of *Time*, Mr. Leonard has recorded a lot of important scientific advances in the last ten years—and a lot of scientific trivia and exotica too. There are examples of all three in this collection of 152 of Mr. Leonard's stories from the science section of *Time*.

The stories appear here unchanged—just as they ran in the magazine at various times between 1945 and 1955. For some obscure reason, the stories are also undated, so that the general reader, coming up against statements like "A more conventional effort to map the Milky Way has just been completed . . . ", has the dubious privilege of making his own guess as to when, within a ten-year period, this effort was made.

Though there is no apparent attempt to organize these pieces chronologically, they are at least divided into five groups: The Behavior of Matter, The Stars and the Earth, A Gallery of Machines, The Living World, and the Story of Man—or, roughly, physics, astronomy, engineering, biology, and anthropology and archaeology.

It may be because there are so many bits and pieces here, but, at any rate, the book seems best—and certainly most solid—in its earlier sections, getting scrappier as it goes along.

The first section, for instance, on The Behavior of Matter, starts off with the story of the "Manhattan Engineer District," as revealed in the Smyth report in 1945; ultrasonics comes up next; then an early description of the action and effects of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; an account of how close the Nazis came to producing an atomic bomb during the war; an admirable explanation of relativity; an intimate report on the first nuclear chain reaction at the University of Chicago in 1942; and an essay on the rapid march of science in the 20th century.

Most of these pieces are extremely short, hovering around 750 words. This may be just the right portion of science to serve a newsmagazine reader who also has to work his way through a dozen other courses from Hemisphere to Cinema: readers of this book, however, may feel they are being offered slightly stale canapés in lieu of a good dinner.