

*Science & Technology***FOX TALBOT AND
THE INVENTION OF
PHOTOGRAPHY**

by Gail Buckland
Godine, 1980
216 pp. \$50

**FOX TALBOT:
Photographer**

by Robert Lassam
Kent State Univ., 1981
90 pp. \$22.50 cloth,
\$9.95 paper

William Henry Fox Talbot (1800–77) was an accomplished scientist, mathematician, folklorist, etymologist, and Orientalist who also found time to serve in Britain's House of Commons. In 1833, Talbot got the idea that the camera obscura's "fleeting images" might be made to "imprint themselves durably." The following year, he treated plain writing paper with various salts and silver nitrate and came up with what he called a "photogenic drawing" (what we now call a "negative"). He next discovered that if transparent paper was used, the first picture could serve to produce a second on which light and shadow would be reversed, i.e., a "positive"; a single negative, he figured, could produce multiple positives. Still not satisfied, Talbot invented, among other things, primitive methods of photocopying and halftone reproduction. Talbot was so busy that he did not present his discoveries to London's Royal Institution until January 25, 1839—two weeks after Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre had announced his quite different process in Paris. Buckland, former curator of the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain, recounts the whole story, with ample illustrations, and provides extensive excerpts from Talbot's writings. Lassam, curator of England's Fox Talbot Museum, has written a brief biographical introduction to some 65 full-page reproductions of the world's first photographs—Talbot's grainy still lifes, snapshots of early Victorians posed at work and play, and elegant close-ups of leaves and plants.

**THE COMING OF THE
AGE OF IRON**

edited by Theodore
A. Wertime and James
D. Muhly
Yale, 1981
555 pp. \$22.50

Iron was first used, for ornament, as early as 3000 B.C., probably in northern Turkey. But the Iron Age did not truly dawn until 2,000 years later, when the precious metal was discovered in abundance in the Middle East and began to replace bronze in weapons and tools, notes Wertime, a Smithsonian anthropologist. In these 14 often-technical essays,