



—From the book.

"The Judge's Wife"—"history come to life."

Inheritors of the Mogul

"The Founders of Modern India," by Philip Woodruff (St. Martin's Press. 402 pp. \$5), the first half of a two-volume history of the British in India, carries the story from 1600 to 1858. Here it is reviewed by William B. Willcox, professor of history at the University of Michigan and author of *"Star of Empire: A Study of Britain as a World Power."*

By William B. Willcox

HISTORIANS are almost always handicapped by having to work with material that is outside their direct experience. Knowing about events is no substitute for having lived through them. Sir Charles Firth is said to have known Cromwell's soldiers better than Cromwell did, but even Firth could not bring the Ironsides back to life. Such magic can be achieved only at rare moments, when a writer's background and imaginative insight enable him to transcend the limits of the professional historian. The professional is trained to hunt facts, not to cultivate empathy. He is therefore wide open to a question recently popular among the young: "Was you there, Charlie?"

Philip Mason, who writes under the pen name of Woodruff, was unques-

tionably there. From the start his book, *"The Founders of Modern India,"* carries authority. The author's distinguished record in the Indian civil service, extending over almost two decades, has given him an affectionate understanding of the country, and he has by nature a keen and articulate sense of the past. Because he knows at first hand the problems he is describing, he handles the founders as if they were his contemporaries. He frequently points out, it is true, the injustice of judging them by the hindsight of a later age. But he approaches them on the assumption that the essence of administration changes no more than human nature, and consequently identifies himself with them through his own experience. "A shrewd district officer knows how to deal with all this. The technique is very simple; he rests confident in his own integrity; he takes no action; he waits. . . . This is what Hastings did with Nuncomar."

This attitude toward the past is closer to the artist's than to the orthodox historian's. It has a direct impact, like *"Passage to India"* or *"Plain Tales from the Hills,"* or like Watts's great portrait of Lord Lawrence of the Punjab. Men and incidents are used as symbols of a reality that is too complex for full description. They are substitutes for the generalizations that

are the tissue of most written history—and that are, after all, merely a duller form of symbol. Mr. Mason feels that his method is "less unfair to the reader than abstract comment though still unfair because it selects." Any method worth the name, however, has to be selective, and this one is fair enough if the reader knows what he is getting into.

THE BOOK is not history in the usual sense. It is divided into three parts: the period of the Moguls, the half-century of transformation after 1750, and the "golden age" that ended with the Mutiny of 1857. But within the limits imposed by chronology the author wanders as he pleases, from a biographical sketch to a description of the countryside, or a glimpse of Anglo-Indian society, or a chapter on the Company's college in England. He has a great deal to say on some conventional topics, notably on the relation of land tenure to revenue (a subject, important as it is, that no method can make exciting); he has little to say on some equally important topics, such as the creeping paralysis of Mogul power, Franco-British rivalry in the eighteenth century, or the changing relationship between Whitehall, Leadenhall Street, and the Company officials in India. His focus for the most part is on individuals and their day-to-day wrestling with problems, rather than on the problems themselves.

The book is no more an orthodox collection of biographies than it is orthodox history. The founders appear, disappear, and reappear, until all hope fades of arranging them in a neat portrait gallery. Mr. Mason is concerned, not with neatness, but with writing what he wants to write. He draws on wide reading and experience; his style at its best is vivid with the poetry of place and action. What matter, then, if the book fits into no established category?

Reading it is an absorbing experience. The usual barriers of time and space become insubstantial, as though the reader were introduced to Mr. Mason's club, crowded with members who come and go in bewildering variety. Some of them are stained with ink, some with blood; some are profane and others quote the psalms. But they all talk, often simultaneously, and the few dull ones are soon drowned out. The conversation ranges over one enormous subject. It may confuse the listener because it ranges so far, or tantalize him because it moves so fast. But, unless he is a dull stick, he will be pulled out of himself by the fascination of it. For this is history come to life.

Francis's Fops

"The Gentlemen of Renaissance France," by William Leon Wiley (Harvard University Press. 303 pp. \$5), exhibits the virtues and vices, the whole way of life, of a unique caste that flourished briefly during the sixteenth century. Leo Gershoy, who reviews it below, is visiting professor of history at the University of California at Los Angeles.

By Leo Gershoy

ECONOMIC and social historians have written voluminously in recent years of the rise of the bourgeoisie, and have made that development one of the pivotal phenomena of the sixteenth century. For better or worse the bourgeoisie is with us yet; in a way we are all bourgeois now. It is more novel to have a study of the *gentilhomme*, a type which had only a fleeting moment of glory, from about 1515 to the early 1560's. William Leon Wiley's "The Gentlemen of Renaissance France" treats the fall even more than the rise of this type with learning and with even a note of nostalgic regret.

The Renaissance gentleman, who passed from the stage of French history in the course of the religious wars, took over some of the robust attributes of his medieval French predecessor as well as the elegance of the Italian gentleman. But essentially he was *sui generis*. He belonged by birth to the old fighting nobility. By virtue of that birth he stood highest in the social scale and possessed many rights and privileges. In theory, at least, those were validated by his adherence to a code whose roots went deep into the past. Ideally his values were summed up in the rubric "noblesse oblige." In reality he practised variations upon the code and deviated frequently from the ideal. The elaboration upon his fidelity to and his departure from the code makes up the substance of this study. In successive chapters Mr. Wiley describes in rich detail how the gentleman really behaved: how he dressed and acted, ate and conversed, wooed his lady and fought his rival, traveled and thought—when he did.

The account is full and valuable. All readers, irrespective of special interests, can profit from the painstaking literary research which has gone into the making of this compendious historical dictionary. It is no doubt fitting, since the long extinct gentleman has become a kind of museum piece,

that he should be placed in a museum exhibit, arranged so to speak by rooms, each duly catalogued. As tastes in gentlemen differ as in other things, one room will appeal less than another, which is natural enough. In all of them the visitor is likely to be struck by that curious professional and almost irresistible urge of the curator to give multiple illustrations of a single theme. He may also feel, to keep the metaphor, that a crowded exhibit bears an inverse ratio to the individual's capacity for concentration. Profusion of details has a way of crowding out perspective.

TAKEN for what it supplies, a colorful and varied sequence of portraits, incidents, and episodes in the life span of a caste, "The Gentleman of Renaissance France" will undoubtedly find its appropriate place in the reading public. To what degree readers will accept Mr. Wiley's evaluation of the worth of the gentleman and his contribution to modern civilization is something else again. For the author concludes that "it is no longer necessary [that the] essence of gentility be clothed in velvet and lace, or to bear a noble's title. The gentleman's legacy to his modern descendants is discernible today in their courtesy of gesture, their sense of personal honor and integrity, of modesty and reserve, and in their feeling of strength and leadership in times of strife. The gentleman of sixteenth-century France, despite his imperfections, made a contribution to civilizing the world." Scholars have a way of moving from conscious impersonal rehabilitation of their subject to unconscious romantic infatuation. Readers are more hard boiled.



Mrs. Trollope—"everything went wrong."

Unhappy Immigrant

"The Indomitable Mrs. Trollope," by Eileen Bigland (J. B. Lippincott. 255 pp. \$3.50), is a new biography of the English writing lady who mothered a novelist named Anthony, with emphasis on her years in Cincinnati, Ohio.

By Helen Beal Woodward

CINCINNATI, Ohio, has never really forgiven Mrs. Trollope. One hundred and twenty-two years have gone by since the local religious frenzies, dishwater-dull social life, and fondness for spitting became the subjects of acid comment in "Domestic Manners of the Americans," but solid Cincinnati still bridle at mention of the author's name and the local guidebooks refer to her with hauteur.

Eileen Bigland's new biography, "The Indomitable Mrs. Trollope," will not lay the ghost of Mrs. Trollope's reputation as a shrew. It is, however, a competent and sympathetic portrait of a very game old dame.

When Fanny Trollope sailed for America in 1828 with three of her five children, she was forty-eight. Saddled with a hypochondriac husband who had shown himself incapable of earning a living, Mrs. Trollope had conceived the desperate idea of seeking the family fortune in the United States, where she hoped to establish her son Henry.

Everything went wrong. Nashoba, the utopian colony in Tennessee where the Trollopes had expected to settle, turned out to be a fever-stricken clearing in the wilderness. Off to a fresh start in Cincinnati, Mrs. Trollope wrote commissioning her husband to buy goods in England for a Cincinnati bazaar, but the letters lay unanswered and the goods, when they came, were rubbish. Meanwhile, Fanny caught malaria, Henry nearly died of the Cincinnati climate, and to all the hardships of poverty and illness in a strange land were added those caused by Mrs. Trollope's natural tactlessness and the anti-British sentiment of the era and the area.

Small wonder that a good deal of rancor marked Mrs. Trollope's narrative. Americans were furious, but they bought her book, and launched the author on the grinding out of one novel and travel book after another. At fifty-five she was cook; nurse, housekeeper, and breadwinner for six people, including her grouchy invalid husband and two tubercular children. At night she drugged herself with laudanum so that she could stay awake to write. So she came, without