

Threadneedle's Trail

"A Concise Economic History of Great Britain from 1750 to Recent Times," by W. H. B. Court (Cambridge University Press. 368 pp. \$4), brings together between the covers of a single volume the most recent scholarship on a subject that has materially affected every citizen of the Western world. Herbert Heaton, who reviews it here, is professor of economics at the University of Minnesota and author of "An Economic History of Europe."

By Herbert Heaton

THE INDUSTRIAL Revolution is, as Professor Edward C. Kirkland puts it, "as inescapable in a college course as Aristotle or the amoeba." Britain's emergence as the first industrial state is recognized as an epoch in world history; its loss of that priority and supremacy is noted as a major factor in the later shifting of national power; and its development of "the welfare state" is academically glanced at with approval or alarm. Yet this half-familiar tale has needed to be retold for the benefit of the general reader and of the general historian, because of the intensive, fruitful, even revolutionary research work of economic historians during the last two or three decades. New source materials, new ideas about what is important, new tools and techniques—including the national income concepts of the statisticians and the talk about investment, savings, and the like among economists—have rendered much that was orthodox thirty years ago almost as outdated as Mercator's projection or a pre-nuclear book on physics.

Professor W. H. B. Court has drawn heavily on this recent research to give us the new view of the story in "A Concise Economic History of Great Britain from 1750 to Recent Times." His central thesis is that a small land, faced with rapidly rising population after about 1750, was enabled by improvements in farming, industry, transportation, and trade to avoid that decline in living standards which occurred in countries where population grew but productive methods stood still, as in Ireland, India, and China. At first the British did little more than maintain in general the customary low

standard of preceding centuries; but by the Victorian era, say the 1840s or 1850s, when the growth of national income began markedly to outstrip that of population, vast masses of the people became accustomed to the idea, commonplace today but novel then, of a rising standard of living.

Britain's relatively fortunate lot was possible because sufficient numbers of men were bent on increasing their incomes by seeking new methods, machines, or ways of organizing enterprises, and by ploughing abnormally large investments into farms, factories, canals, highways, railroads, steamships, and the whole fixed or operating capital requirements of an industrial state. Investment is Professor Court's *leitmotif*.

It was private investment, made by men willing to risk their money in any undertaking that looked profitable in a land and a period that more than any other deserve the label "free enterprise." Some of it was blind and greedy, as were some managers of businesses, but not all. As it came entirely from domestic savings, "such an internal effort laid, and was bound to lay, a heavy burden upon the people" until the economy was over the hump. Its flow was not even, but alternated violently between the booms and busts which it helped to cause and according to prices present or prospective. It reached its greatest volume in the expansive years 1850-1873.

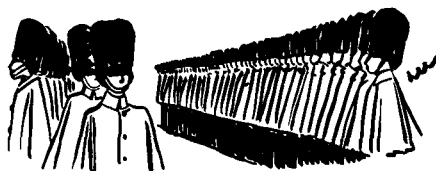
IN THE interwar years investors shunned the great staple industries—coal, cotton, shipbuilding, and iron—which had been the pillars of the Victorian economy but were now tottering. Instead funds went into new fields—chemicals, plastics, electrical appliances, and the like. Hence the years 1919-1939, like those of a hundred years before, saw the old decay and the new develop with peculiar intensity. In both periods the sufferings of those involved in the declining industries caused great social bitterness which obscured in part the introduction of new techniques and large-scale capacity. For Britain was

far from ended as an industrial state. In fact, Mr. Court claims that as a result of these processes of decay and growth the economic structure which carried the economic effort of World War II was more ample in its product than that available in World War I.

Around this central theme Mr. Court assembles the problems of transition to an urban civilization. His judgments on the social aspects of that great change will not please those who insist that entrepreneurs indulged in an orgy of soulless cupidity, or those who seem to suggest that welfare and happiness can be measured by the trend of real wages. In the current controversy about "Capitalism and the Historians" no one can accuse him of an "anti-capitalistic bias" or of its opposite. He is too much of a combination of the dispassionate and the compassionate.

Notes

WALLY AND EDDIE: In these days of icy war and H-bomb it is hard to remember back to 1936 when the world was held breathless by the romance of Mrs. Simpson and the then King Edward VIII. Yet after reading "The Woman Who Would Be Queen," by Geoffrey Bocca (Rinehart, \$4), it cannot be said that we were all terribly naive in 1936. For the romance of Edward and Wallis, the impact of which has been dulled by World War II, was quite an event, moving toward Abdication with (even today) an excruciating suspense. Though put forward as a biography of the fashionable lady who instead of becoming Queen became Duchess of Windsor, the book contains as much about the contradictory, exasperating man who became the Duke. Mr. Bocca says the King-for-a-Year fell in love with Wallis with the same Hanoverian intensity that his great-grandmother Victoria felt for her Albert—an illuminating comparison. He also etches Wallis's Baltimore childhood, pointing out that even then she possessed an "inhuman sophistication." By quoting those who know her, he indicates that the Duchess talks constantly, which may well delight the Duke, whose Prince of Wales years were largely passed in forcing conversations with people he had never seen before and would never see again. Altogether Mr. Bocca has done a remarkable job of revivifying one of the important love stories of all time. It moves from high drama, to comedy of errors (and stupidity), to tragic-comedy, to seeming tragedy, but the author labors none unduly. Perhaps his most unusual feat is that, even after the dreary society-page stories



of the last decade, he makes the love of Edward and Wallis seem a romance again. —ALLEN CHURCHILL.

THE QUEEN MOTHER: Americans who were further won to England's Queen Mother (as who was not) on her recent visit to this country will find more about that cheery lady in "*Royal Mother, The Story of Queen Mother Elizabeth and Her Family*," by Jennifer Ellis (Prentice-Hall, \$2.95). A frankly admiring, anecdotal biography, this begins with her birth as Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon in 1900 and continues affectionately to the present day. There are, of course, numerous stories of King George VI, as well as of the current Queen and Princess Margaret, who were surprisingly normal children. Well illustrated, and not at all hard to read. —A. C.

INDIAN ADMINISTRATOR: Professor Keith Feiling of the University of Oxford is the author of several important historical studies on periods as wide-ranging as the eras of the Tudors and of Victoria. But, like most historians, he has failed to maintain uniform standards of excellence in his writings. His biography of Neville Chamberlain, written too soon after the death of its hero, often reads more like a Conservative Party pamphlet than a sober historical study. His "History of England from the Coming of the English to 1918" is too often superficial, disorganized, and uninformed as to the results of recent research.

His latest book, "*Warren Hastings*" (St. Martin's Press, \$6), is also a disappointment. In part this is not Professor Feiling's fault, for it would be hard to find a biographical subject more elusive than Hastings (1732-1818). He was an almost unbelievably complicated figure who lived in an age the understanding of which becomes more difficult as time passes. Professor Feiling is certainly sympathetic to his subject, but he lacks the feeling for eighteenth-century India that is necessary if Hastings is to be brought back to life in the setting in which he functioned as a colonial administrator.

Unhappily, his book is largely a collection of facts, both important and trivial; and he has seen fit only rarely to comment on the significance of the details in which he revels. This reticence is all the more unfortunate in the light of the analytical and interpretative gifts that he demonstrated in earlier writings. In short, if Professor Feiling had given as much time to thinking about the material he gathered as he did to the process of accumulating notes he would have written a far better biography.

—HERMAN AUSUBEL.



NEW EDITIONS

Conglomerate Religions

WE ORDINARILY use the words Hinduism and Buddhism without qualification, as if each stood for one definite body of belief, but we can use neither with accuracy unless we specify the time and place and sect of which we are speaking. Hinduism is an ocean into which many streams have flowed. Buddhism is a giant tree that has sent forth many branches, and borne strangely different fruits. Or—to change the figures of speech—it might be better to say that both Hinduism and Buddhism are jungles of metaphysics and mythology, in which the curious but innocent explorer will find himself hopelessly lost unless he has the aid of a learned guide. Such expert guidance is provided by three books recently published by Barnes & Noble. One is "*Hinduism and Buddhism*" (3 vols., \$17.50), by Sir Charles Eliot; the other two, by Edward J. Thomas, are "*The Life of Buddha*" (\$6.50) and "*The History of Buddhist Thought*" (\$6.50).

Sir Charles's comprehensive work, first published in 1921, and still, I believe, preeminent in its field, carries the subtitle "An Historical Sketch." But the word "sketch" does no justice to the learning that supports and informs it. What Sir Charles gives us is a clear, detailed account of the dominant role that religion has played in Indian life, and a further account of the remarkable conquests of Buddhism outside India—in Ceylon, Burma, Siam, Cambodia, Korea, Japan, and Tibet. But the success of Buddhism abroad was made possible by an adaptability that verged on opportunism, and the long history of Hinduism is a history of assimilation and corruption. "Indian thought," declares Sir Charles, "makes clearings in the jungle of mythology, which become obliterated or diminished as the jungle grows over them again. Buddhism was the most thorough of such clearings, yet it was invaded more rapidly and completely than any other."

Dr. Thomas's books complement and confirm—despite minor differences—the work of Sir Charles Eliot. "*The Life of Buddha*" is subtitled "As Legend and History," and in his introduction to "*The History of Buddhist Thought*" the author makes it clear that "the popular story of Buddha's life, as known to the West, is merely the modern version" of a single tradition, "and it has been made plausible

only by ignoring the other accounts and omitting all the marvels." Of particular value in "*The Life*" is the appendix that gives a complete bibliography of the Pali Canon "as known to Buddhaghosa in the fifth century A.D."

India's role in world affairs is of increasing importance, and it is increasingly important that we should understand the Indian "mind." Sir Charles Eliot and Dr. Thomas can help us towards such an understanding.

THE revised edition of Abbott Payson Usher's "*A History of Mechanical Inventions*" (Harvard University Press, \$9) returns to print a fascinating book that is more than a history. "For purposes of economic and social activity," writes Professor Usher, "the geographic environment is not the totality of physical features, but only that part of the complex which we can conceivably use, immediately or ultimately. This effective geographic environment is determined by our skills in using it; it is, therefore, related to the development of technology. The environment is enlarged by new knowledge and new skills. The distinctive feature of human evolution lies in this fact. Human societies not only select an environment, they make their environment." In other words—and it is a thought to dwell on—man is the only animal who has ever been able to make his own future. The part played by the subconscious mind, or by intuition, in this constructive process is dealt with in Jacques Hadamard's "*The Psychology of Invention in the Mathematical Field*" (Dover, \$1.25)—a good companion volume for Professor Usher's "History."

Doubleday has boxed three of Irving Stone's best-sellers—"Immortal Wife," "The President's Lady," and "Love Is Eternal"—as "A Trilogy of American Marriage" (\$10). "The Tempest" (\$3.50), edited by Frank Kermode, and "Antony and Cleopatra" (\$3.85), edited by M. R. Ridley, have been added to the Arden Shakespeare (Harvard University Press) praised before now in this department; "The Duke's Children," a better novel than some critics think it is, has been added to the Oxford Trollope Crown Edition (\$5.75); and the most recent addition to the New Oxford Illustrated Dickens is "Christmas Books" (\$2.50).

—BEN PAY REDMAN.