candidate to middle-class seriousness, is the butt of Aymé's irony throughout the novel. His brother Honoré, who entertained no such pretentions, cultivated his land, believed in hard work (and, of course, in unbridled loving, in hard drinking, and in robust meals), is on the contrary treated with kindliness. Both have a family secret to conceal: their mother was raped during the Franco-Prussian War, perhaps with too nonchalant resistance on her part, by a German sergeant. But no one in the village is shocked when the secret leaks out through the negligence of the picturesque local mail-carrier.

The two main concerns of the family are to keep their children from indulging the seductive pitfalls of physical love too soon and to nurture their hatred for the Maloret family, their rivals and their foes. A series of disconnected and entertaining adventures follow, broken in by imaginary remarks on the Haudoin family made by the painted green mare.

The plot of such a loose fantasy obviously cannot be taken seriously. Like many novels by Aymé, this one is a clever patchwork of vignettes. At all times the reader is aware of being projected into a world of unreality, akin to that of Rabelais or even of Swift, where all the restraints of daily life are lifted.

Such simplification may attract those whose brains have been fatigued by Proust and Sartre, but it can hardly promise lasting fame for "The Green Mare." Sex under all its forms (except in its delicate and sentimental ones) is the obsession of all the characters. And sex, when there stand no outward obstacles, no social restraints, no psychological inhibitions between desire and fulfilment, can indeed be a dull affair. There lurks a bitter *acedia amoris* behind Marcel Aymé's strained Gallic licentiousness and there is much artificiality behind his sharp and sardonic verve.

DIPLOMATIC AFFAIR: The core of the somewhat implausible plot in **"The Consul's Wife,"** by William L. Shirer, journalist turned novelist (Little, Brown, $3.50), is: What ails Ilka? Ilka is the wife of the American consul at Pawancore, and she is beautiful and accomplished. But Ilka was a Hungarian by birth, and at Pawancore she is helping the local nationalists with confidential information picked up from her husband and from the governor-general himself. Since one of the revolutionary leaders in disguise, young Govind Singh, is a daily visitor to the consul's villa, this piece of treachery on the part of Ilka is not nearly as cumbersome as it may

W. L. Shirer—"journalist turned novelist."

seem, though just what provoked Ilka into such a course of action is not quite clear. Perhaps, in the turbulent fashion of Hungarians, she is reaching out for a great, all-encompassing act of pure selflessness that would, in retrospect, give meaning to her entire life. Or perhaps the talkative, flashy, Oxford-educated Govind Singh has beguiled her rather more than she is willing to admit to herself. At any rate, fragile as they are, such motives quickly involve Ilka in a web of violence that culminates in Govind Singh's plan to assassinate the governor-general at *her* garden party, with *her* help. By then, of course, Ilka has changed her mind, but it is too late. In the final analysis this reviewer is tempted to side with a junketing Senator who descends upon the hapless consul during the course of the novel, who demands a courier plane to take him back to Washington, and who makes one sensible remark—a remark to the effect that American consular officials abroad have no business marrying foreigners.

—JOSEPH HITREC.

WILLIAM SANSOM'S MIXED BAG: The most obvious thing about William Sansom is that he is not one but three writers, and in his latest collection of short stories, **"A Contest of Ladies"** (Reynal, $3.50), all three varieties coexist awkwardly. In each story he is at his best, his least, or his mediocre self throughout. Take the title story. It's about an aging actor who amuses himself by taking in six women from six different countries who want to win a beauty contest, and it is the sort of story you'd expect from a gifted hack. Then there's "A Woman Seldom Found," which is about a man who unexpectedly finds a lovely, aristocratic woman who wants to sleep with him (and which reads like something written for an undercounter magazine by Franz Kafka). Fortunately, however, the very good stories are in the majority. In " A Roman Holiday" an Englishman admires St. Peter's because the statues remind him of "Selby's advertisements for Ladies' Spring Gowns," and probably there has never been a better story about the urbanite who thinks he loves the country and is terrified by nature than is "A Country Walk." Best of all are two very short stories, "Alicia" and "Pas de Deux." The first of these is about a girl of three who is never perturbed by what disturbs her seniors; the second is a cold and unforgettable telling of the lovemaking of a male and a female spider.

—*Kay Bell.*

William Sansom—"unpredictable."

Since Mr. Sansom gives so much that is good and excellent it seems unfair to carp at his unevenness. No modern short-story writers except Erskine Caldwell, Walter Van Tilburg Clark, and Eudora Welty (and these only at their best) have his ability literally to cast a spell from which you can never recover. "Somewhere," Horace Gregory has said, "in William Sansom exists the best, the most unpredictable writer of short fiction that England has produced since the death of D. H. Lawrence." One keeps hoping that he will learn in both his short stories and his novels to maintain the very high level of which he has shown that he is capable instead of descending, as he so frequently does, into slickness—and worse.

—HARVEY CURTIS WEBSTER.

SEX AND EXCITEMENT IN THE JUNGLE: On the cover of William Manchester's **"Shadow of the Monsoon"** (Doubleday, $4.50), there is a composite of a man, a woman, and a tiger. The man looks wistful, the woman looks confused, and only the tiger conveys any real sense of character. Surrounding these figures there is a dense, tangled undergrowth, and above hangs a veil of impenetrable fog. Presumably the artist was striving to capture the spirit

(*Continued on page* 26)

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INDIA: TWO VIEWS

—New York Times.

ROBERT TRUMBULL, chief of *The New York Times* Tokyo bureau, has been a newspaperman all his adult life. A native of Chicago, a graduate of the University of Illinois, he started as a reporter on *The Honolulu Advertiser,* later became its city editor. Joining *The Times* during World War II, he covered Pacific fighting fronts; then came the seven-year tour of duty that gave him the material for "As I See India" (below).

CYNTHIA BOWLES, who will be twenty this summer, is now a student at Oberlin and hopes to become a public-health nurse after graduation. She was in her second year at the Essex, Conn., high school in 1951 when her father, former advertising executive and Governor of Connecticut, was appointed U. S. Ambassador to India. Her book "At Home in India" (below) is an account of the twenty-one months that followed.

—Louise Barker.

1. Correspondent

***"As I See India," by Robert Trumbull** (William Sloane. 256 pp. $4). Margaret Parton, who covered India for* The New York Herald-Tribune *before becoming associate editor of the* Ladies' Home Journal, *reviews Mr. Trumbull's and Miss Bowles's books on this and the next page.*

INDIA has a curious effect on observers; curious in the diversity of reaction and reflection it arouses. Half a dozen books immediately tumble to mind. "Ambassador's Report"—emotional, cause-pleading, filled with good will. "Mother India"—a sewer inspector's report, Gandhi called it, and rightly so. "An American in India"—a frightened alarm on the Red dawn in Bharat by a lecturer who saw only the worst of the pseudo-intellectuals. "My Gandhi"—spiritual India, and why are we all so wicked? "Just Half a World Away"—one of the few recent books which catches the timeless essence of India and places it in a present context. The main thing they all have in common is that each reflects the emotional reaction of the author to particular facts of diverse India.

And that is why Mr. Trumbull's "As I See India" is both refreshing and, in a very minor way, disappointing.

It is refreshing, first of all, because it is so dispassionate. This, of course, is only to be expected, since Mr. Trumbull was *The New York Times*'s correspondent in India for seven years—and if *The Times* trains its reporters in anything (which it certainly does) it trains them in dispassion. "As I See India" is, therefore, exactly what should be expected from one of the world's best newspaper's best reporters.

Offhand this reviewer, who tries to keep up with them all, can't think of any other book about India which covers as many beat and off-beat subjects as this one does. W. Norman Brown's "The United States and India and Pakistan" may have more facts on recent history to the square inch but, after all, Dr. Brown didn't actually go to the Kashmir war and see how it was. Mr. Trumbull did. His conclusions will not make the Indians happy.

Mr. Trumbull also rode refugee trains under attack during the riots and migrations of 1947, and his description of his experiences is accurate, objective, and not nearly as hair-raising as the riots actually were. This reviewer, who also covered that incredible slaughter, has always agreed with Mr. Trumbull's belief that "the fault of the correspondents, myself included, was in failing to impart in their daily dispatches a sense of the full enormity of what was going on around them."

But the riots, quite rightly, are a minor part of Mr. Trumbull's reminiscences; what he is doing here is to remember seven years in a dramatic and significant country, and also to give a bird's-eye view of every conceivable problem which plagues or intrigues India today. Anglo-Indians, linguistics, Kashmir, maharajahs, Pakistan, land reform, "Crazy Mixed-Up Communists" (as he calls them), earthquakes, monkeys, heat, the Gandhian residue, spirituality *versus* materialism—in swift and telling paragraphs Mr. Trumbull covers them all.

It is in the political sphere in which Mr. Trumbull obviously feels most at home. He was privileged to have many lengthy and informal interviews with Prime Minister Nehru, and his understanding of the Prime Minister is as evident as his sympathy—a detached sympathy, of course, befitting his training. The chapter on India's foreign policy, in particular, should be required reading for every American politician, statesman, editorial writer, or visitor to India; no better, simpler, or more accurate explanation has (as far as this reviewer knows) been made. Anyone who has ever lived in India knows the absurdity of ever thinking Nehru or the country seriously pro-Communist; Mr. Trumbull has the patience to discuss the absurdity, and strip it, with a straight face.

The disappointment we have left to the end, for it is perhaps a personal reaction—this feeling that Mr. Trumbull himself has remained untouched by the India in which he lived for seven years. Timeless, enduring, written in the smoke of the cow-dust hour and the faces of ancient peasants, it seems to lurk just out of sight of the gay memories, the interesting and not too tedious facts. Where is India? And where, for that matter, is Mr. Trumbull? He remains forever the sharp-eyed, the inquiring, the dispassionate American reporter.

2. Envoy's Daughter

***"At Home in India," by Cynthia Bowles** (Harcourt, Brace. 180 pp. $3).*

ENCOUNTERS between India and the foreigner who lives there often become a test of character—not of the Indian, but of the foreigner. "They never smile," says one Westerner. "They're all sullen and grim." But Cynthia Bowles thought it was "the friendliest country in the world." So often it depends on what you bring with you, on what you want to find.

Cynthia Bowles brought a great deal with her when at fifteen she arrived in India, where her father was to be the new American ambassador. The product of a civilized New England family, she brought tolerance and an eagerness to learn, she brought a heart which could be touched. Best of all, she brought youth, untarnished yet by boredom or prejudice against alien ways of life. With these gifts it was inevitable that she would plunge headfirst into the human life of India, shock many of the diplo-

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