

that happened that the author answers by implication, but seldom by direct analysis, the question of "why" this or that happened.

Less satisfactory than Miss Wedgwood's brilliant accounts of the battles of Edgehill, Marston Moor, and Naseby is her handling of the religious question. Although the distinction between Presbyterian and Independent is correctly stressed, the reader does not receive a clear picture of just who the Independents were. They are not defined as the group most concerned with religious toleration but instead are identified with decreasing accuracy as the dominant body in the New Model Army, the political party known as the Levellers, and the majority in the House of Commons. On this last group, the Independents cannot be said to have had a majority in the Commons until Pride's Purge of the Presbyterians in December, 1648. But this is a minor criticism of a work whose author is unsurpassed in her knowledge of the source materials and whose style of writing is both engaging and scholarly.

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Leo F. Solt

George III and the Historians. Revised edition. By Herbert Butterfield. (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1959. Pp. 304. Index. \$5.00.)

Historians have many weaknesses, but among the most common is a tendency to set up straw men in order to accomplish their destruction more impressively. Herbert Butterfield, Master of Peterhouse, Cambridge University, has done just this in his recent book *George III and the Historians*. The straw man in this case is the Namier school of historians, a group whose flaws are grotesquely exaggerated by Professor Butterfield in overzealous efforts to discredit his colleagues.

First published two years ago in England, *George III and the Historians* now appears in a slightly revised American edition. But apart from increasing the book's availability, there seems little justification for transporting an unhappy and tasteless controversy from its native English shores. Perhaps attacking each other has become the favorite pastime of British historians; Hugh Trevor-Roper's savage indictment of Toynbee's alleged pretensions to divinity is one recent sample of the acerbity with which English scholars can write of each other. While Professor Butterfield never quite attains the level of Trevor-Roper's invective, his prose waxes warm in treating the Namier school as "the most powerfully organized squadron in our historical world," developing "so formidable an orthodoxy as to check the free play of criticism" (p. 10). Suffice it to note that Butterfield's criticism enjoys an impressive freedom of play.

Here then is a controversial book. If it served to explore the nature of its own controversy some useful purpose would be served. But instead Butterfield supplies an extraordinarily obscure and allusive study of the historiography of eighteenth-century England with the primary objective of minimizing the contributions of the Namier group of historians. In short, Butterfield seems to be fearful of historical empire-building by Sir Lewis Namier, who just thirty years ago published his famous study of *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George*

III. Here Namier provided a detailed examination of the personnel of the House of Commons, demonstrating the absence of any modern concept of a political party and proving that the prevailing notions of Whigs and Tories would have to be modified substantially. He followed this work with *England in the Age of the American Revolution* (1930), in which he argued that George III was constitutional in his conduct and had little choice other than to select his ministers in the absence of a party system, even though this very action became a political issue upon which a Whig party developed. Namier's careful research disclosed that the old ideas of the omnipotent monarch were baseless, that George III had in fact a highly limited Civil List and Secret Service Fund, and that his patronage potential was relatively confined. Like Butterfield, Namier has made many brilliant excursions away from the eighteenth century, but returned to the fold in 1952 with the excellent "Monarchy and the Party System," in *Personalities and Powers* (London, 1955). He is currently undertaking a revision of his earlier work as part of a series which he is directing, titled *England in the Age of the American Revolution*. Among the historians who have followed Namier's technique and arguments, Butterfield has singled out Romney Sedgwick, John Brooke, and J. B. Owen, who seem to comprise the menacing historical fleet so much to be feared.

The real basis for such a fear is hard to ascertain. Butterfield himself shares wide areas of agreement with Namier—indeed, it would be difficult to do otherwise. But Butterfield does argue for the existence of more of a party system than Namier would concede. And Butterfield does justly rebuke John Brooke for a species of one-upmanship—Brooke fails to cite secondary works which he must have used and so suggests an unreal originality of material and thought. On the other hand, Stephen Potter himself would be proud to point to Butterfield's assumptive and obscurantist performance as a superlative example of one-upmanship in reviewing. *George III and the Historians* is in essence just a long and rather ill-contrived book review with little of the charm, urbanity, and insight usually associated with Herbert Butterfield. The only enjoyable section of what seems an awfully long book is the excellent opening essay, "The Historian and His Evidence," which should be required reading for all would-be historians.

Butterfield's American publishers concede that here is a book "of special interest to professional historians," but this reviewer would suggest that amateur ranks will swell suspiciously if this is to be a test of status. Stephen Potter would enjoy it, but for vastly different reasons.

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H. Trevor Colbourn

The Canal Builders: The Story of Canal Engineers Through the Ages.

By Robert Payne. (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1959. Pp. ix, 278. Illustrations, maps, select bibliography, index. \$5.00.)

Like a summer tourist scurrying around Europe, Mr. Payne's superficial story gallops through more than five thousand years of