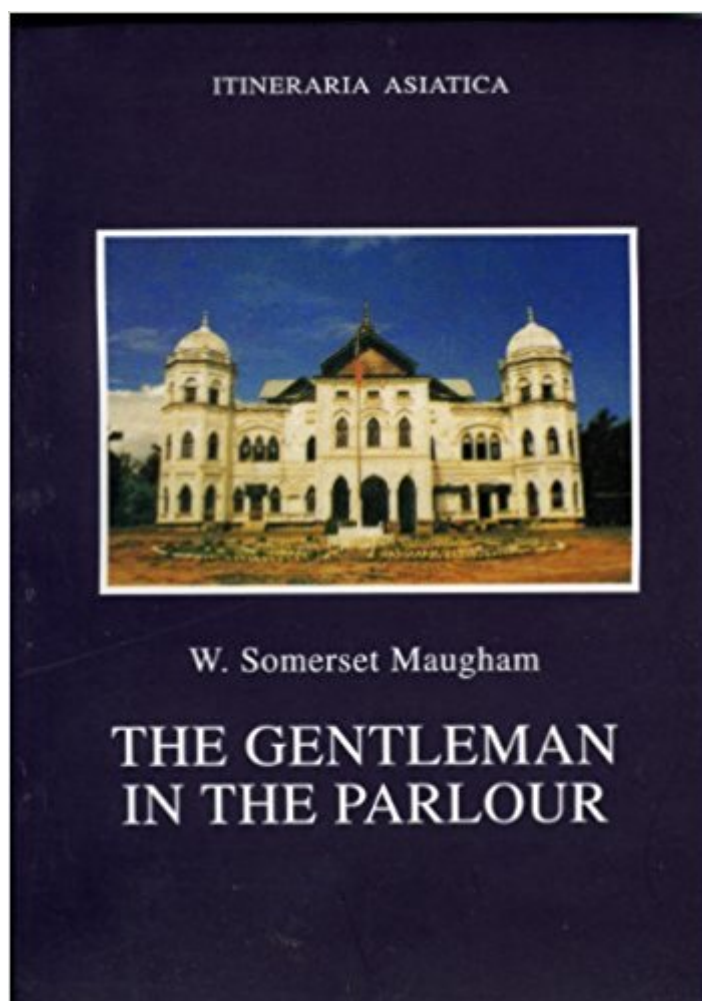


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The Gentleman In The Parlour (Itineraria Asiatica: Burma)



Synopsis

Among the many memorable books on travels in Burma before the Second World War, Somerset Maugham's leisurely progress from London via Colombo, then up the Irrawaddy to Mandalay and onwards through the then peaceful Shan States to Thailand and Cambodia ranks among the most enjoyable. He was not only a sharp-eyed observer of human nature but writes about his encounters with a good deal of empathy quite uncommon among travel writers of the 1920's

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

William Somerset Maugham was an English author, playwright, and doctor best known for the semi-autobiographical novel *Of Human Bondage*. Orphaned at a young age, Maugham was raised, unhappily, by his uncle, who urged him into a medical career despite his talent and interest in writing. Maugham gave up his career in medicine after his first novel, *Liza of Lambeth*, sold out its initial printing in several weeks, and next ventured into playwriting with *Lady Frederick*, which was such a success that by the following year Maugham had four plays running simultaneously. Maugham worked for the British Secret Service during the First World War, travelling all over the world before making his home in the south of France after Second World War and using his experiences as inspiration for new stories. Before his death in 1965, Maugham published many more successful novels including *The Letter* and *The Razor's Edge*, both of which were adapted into feature films. Maugham has been remembered as one of the most influential and successful writers of his era, and is believed to have been the highest paid author of the 1930s.

Somerset Maugham was one of the world's most famous and widely-read writers of the early 20th Century. Now that 100 years have passed, he is hardly read at all, except for *OF HUMAN BONDAGE* and maybe *THE MOON AND SIXPENCE*. This is a major loss for booklovers, because Maugham wrote with an incomparable dignity, clarity, and insight. In *THE GENTLEMAN IN THE PARLOUR*, he takes his gifts to the Far East -- into a colonial world that no longer exists on the face of the earth. He experiences a way of life that we will never see again. As a small, stammering homosexual, Maugham was far from the stereotypical conquering Englishman, yet he observed all the perquisites of class and station, traveling in style as one of the first truly rich (from his writing) authors. At all times he wrote frankly and unflinchingly, before "telling it like it is" became a catchphrase. As a self-made writer who labored to achieve and maintain his craft, he also wrote with unerring elegance. His great novels are somewhat strained, if you will, by the dictates of fiction and his publishers. *GENTLEMAN IN THE PARLOUR*, however, is a purer Maugham, something closer to a remarkable human personality who should be celebrated with his contemporaries D.H. Lawrence, Joseph Conrad, Henry James, and even James Joyce. Maugham saw inside the human heart as clearly as any of them, but perhaps modern audiences are not as pleased with what he saw.

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