

## Chance Acquaintances

ORIENT EXPRESS. By GRAHAM GREENE. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company. 1933. \$2.

Reviewed by BEN RAY REDMAN

WHATEVER the reason, whether or not it is the fretful, shifting movement of modern life, which makes continued concentration upon a single subject more difficult for us than it was for our fathers, there has recently developed a kind of fiction (on the stage as well as in print) calculated to please minds that are darting, impatient, and ever avid of variety. The authors who cater to these minds, weave, telescope, or jumble, according to their skill, six or a dozen stories into one. Instead of dogging the steps of a hero or heroine from birth to death, after the fashion of yesterday, they establish momentary contact with a group of characters, fortuitously or forcefully gathered together upon some spot of the earth's surface, and reveal them to our dancing eyes in a series of quick flashes. Whether it be from room to room of a grand hotel, from house to house of a city block, from cabin to cabin of a luxury liner, or from one guest to another guest invited to the same dinner party, our attention is shuttled back and forth as the author turns swiftly from tale to tale. Sometimes these tales converge to form an organic whole; more often they touch, by accident, at only a few points if at any. The effect is rather like that of a six-ring circus with all rings running at full blast.

Under the title which John Dos Passos used for a book of travel impressions back in 1927, Mr. Greene gives us one of the most exciting and successful novels of this new type that I have read. The action, or almost all of it, takes place in the compartments and corridors of the Orient Express: "Ostende - Cologne - Vienna - Belgrade - Istanbul." The characters are those whom chance has thrown together for the journey. There is Myatt, the Jewish dealer in currants, young, shrewd, sensual, armed with money and good clothes, blending assurance with the social flexibility of his race. There is Coral Musker—slim, poor, underfed, hard-working, girlishly appealing, wise in the ways of men and so far successful in the arts of virginal self-defense—the English music hall dancer who is going out to Constantinople to join a troupe known as Dunn's Babies. There is Dr. Czinner, revolutionist of Belgrade, a humanitarian ready to sacrifice human beings for an ideal, an exile from his native land, returning home with valiant hopes. There is, after Vienna, Josef Grunlich, thief and murderer, a crafty scoundrel innocent of a single redeeming trait. There is Mabel Warren, mannish newspaper woman, hot on the trail of Dr. Czinner, and hysterically in love with Janet Pardoe; and there is the beautiful and vacuous Janet, who thinks it might be more satisfactory to be loved by a man. There is also Mr. Quin Savory, writer of best-selling trash, who yearns to assist Miss Pardoe in being unfaithful to Miss Warren.

The actions of these strangely assorted characters, or rather their interactions, compose Mr. Greene's multiple story. There is no reason to lift it from him for purposes of synopsis here. It is enough to say that his men and women are vigorously realized, that Carol Musker wins our hearts—and would also break them by her misfortune, were we not confident of her ability to care for herself; and that the tale tightens gradually into a well-knit whole. It is certainly permissible, also, to remark that the mood of the novel is essentially one of cynical disillusion. The Orient Express, with its temporary inhabitants, bears a curious miniature resemblance to the planet that once passed under the euphemistic name of the Good Ship Earth. Lives are warped or destroyed by accident and coincidence. Justice is nowhere apparent. The idealistic dreamer dies like the proverbial dog; Carol, the innocent, is dangerously embroiled with forces of which she is ignorant; Grunlich, the contemptible murderer, triumphantly eludes the law; Janet Pardoe, the brainless parasite, falls from one soft bed into another. Myatt, the man of shrewd busi-

ness and discreet sensuality, eats his cake and finds more ready to his hand.

But to write of "Orient Express" in this way is, perhaps, to take over seriously a story that may have been intended only to excite and entertain. Nothing is more elusive than the line across which we step when we pass from merely good current fiction into the realm of genuine literature. One thing is certain, however: whether or not it be anything more, "Orient Express" is very good current fiction. The English Book Society was well justified in its recent choice.

## A Scottish Pastoral

SUNSET SONG. By LEWIS GRASSIC GIBBON. New York: The Century Co. 1933. \$2.

Reviewed by BASIL DAVENPORT

IN the last few years there has appeared a number of books written out of the impulse to catch a vanished or vanishing way of life, and to try to preserve it for posterity, as the poet tries to preserve the fading cheek of his mistress. All such books are written from the heart, they have evident sincerity and tenderness—but they are of very various degrees of merit, and often the author

narrative is extremely jerky; it will stand still at an incident for thirty pages, and then advance to the next one with a violent jolt.

The parts of the book are far better than the whole. The gnarled villagers are vital, convincing, and strongly individual; one likes to hear them talk, to gather up their good, stout prejudices and their vivid country expressions; and if the author has not quite the supreme gift of communicating to us the affection with which he evidently regards them in spite of their faults, still he has the great talent of introducing us to an actual and human society. The language of the book is on the whole excellent; it is full of Scottish words and expressions, introduced so skilfully that they usually explain themselves, and warm the heart as such earthy talk always does. Even here, however, the author has a curious trick of printing the speeches of his characters in italics instead of using quotation marks, which seems to be an affectation, and is at first distracting.

There are many admirable pages in the book, and some delightful ones; but it is impossible not to feel that here was the material for two or three books, each of which would have been better than the present volume.



A SCOTTISH HAMLET, by P. F. Anson. Reproduced from "Artist's Country" (The Studio).

easily convinces us of his own love for his subject, but does not succeed in making us feel that it is lovable. "Sunset Song" is a book of this particular kind. It is intended to be a picture of the Scottish crofters, the independent peasantry who came to an end with the war. The author is not concerned with either the sociological or the dramatic possibilities of the actual downfall of the class; his principal couple are not concerned in it at all, since they have both ceased to be crofters before the end of the book; he wishes solely to portray a little society as it was in 1911 and thereafter, and as it is no more.

In his portrayal he is evidently torn between the desire to leave an authentic, realistic testimony to the future, and the desire to give an idealized picture, an impression of how this little state looked to a lover of it. At least, this seems to be the only way to account for the bewildering changes of tone, and the lack of organization in the narrative. The second and third quarters of the book are taken up with a really lovely, but singularly static idyll; Eean and Chris, two young people, fall in love with each other, and encounter no difficulties, and walk together in beautiful landscapes, and are married; that is all. But the first quarter of the book makes a very different impression; it is a realistic depiction, almost against the author's will, it seems, of a peasantry who are indeed independent, and rather humorous, but who are represented as brutal in every way; they are cruel, they delight in malicious gossip, they are so gross that almost it seems as if every character in the book, from the mistress down, was found lying coupled in the hay. Again at the end, the love-story suddenly and quite unexpectedly turns to tragedy; and the mood is not left unbroken even here, for there is an unconvincing patched-up happy ending for the heroine. In consequence of this constant change of key, the

## One of the Moderns

SOUTH AMERICAN MEDITATIONS. By COUNT HERMANN KEYSERLING. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1932. \$3.50.

Reviewed by ERNEST SUTHERLAND BATES

COUNT KEYSERLING has succeeded Henri Bergson as the popular philosopher of the hour. Each successive book is acclaimed as a masterpiece by the reviewers, each successive tour of the noble author takes on more and more of the character of a royal progress, with public dinners, fêtes, and all but fireworks. The popularization of philosophy, or the philosophification of popularity, begun by William James, has reached its ultimate in Count Keyserling.

The deracination of the contemporary culture of the leisure classes finds in him a perfect expression. Cosmopolitan of the cosmopolitans, wanderer in many lands, equally at home in Paris or Tokio, on Siberian tundras or Argentine pampas, he has given intellectual prestige to the popular passion for globe-trotting. His wide, if none too deep, learning, the extraordinary amount of intellectual plunder which he has gathered alike from ancient mythology and the most recent science, the amazing fertility of his ideas which sprout up on every page with the rank and incoherent profusion of a tropical jungle, all mark him as a modern of the moderns. His extreme temporalism, his contempt for logic, his reliance upon his own intuition—a reliance so overweening as to be almost sublime ("My intuition tells me that these Indians are far older than historical research will have it")—these are in perfect harmony with the impatient, anti-intellectualistic tendencies of the age. Most important of all, he has satisfied the vague longings of his class by a half-mystical, half-magical gospel of salvation, delivered partly with the eloquence of grandiose poetry, partly with the messianic

tones of a new apocrypha,—a gospel which on examination turns out to be the most pretentious of all the many forms of that aristocratic estheticism which is today the most usual type of escape philosophy.

Count Keyserling's hold upon facts has always been decidedly loose; as he would say, facts as such never interested him. The frank subjectivity of his travel books is what gives them their distinctive quality; they record the pilgrimages of a contemporary Childe Harold. The author is always more interested in the reactions of his own sensitivity to the countries through which he passes than in the countries themselves. In "The Travel Diary" one did find subtle distinctions between the various types of Eastern philosophy with illuminating comments upon each; more than that, successive civilizations seemed to rise before our eyes, much interpreted and distorted, no doubt, but still with a semblance of reality in their own right. In Count Keyserling's most recent work, on the other hand, the various nations of South America seem to exist only for the purpose of furnishing the author with an appropriate descriptive formula or text. Edmund Burke might think it impossible to indict a whole nation, but Count Keyserling is now willing to sum up an entire continent in a phrase. South America—all of it—is an embodiment of "The Third Day of Creation," when the earth was separated from the waters and vegetable life appeared. The inhabitants are creatures of earth, with a "frenzied reptilian sexuality"—the Biblical analogy being momentarily forgotten; they are almost mineral in their cold-bloodedness; they are under the dominion of "Gana," irrational impulse, matter barely come to consciousness; the furthest reach of their attainment is to rise to "Delicadeza," the realm of emotional activity which Count Keyserling denominates "The Soul" in distinction from "Spirit" which belongs only to European and Oriental peoples.

"Gana" expresses itself through "Original Hunger," characteristic of the courageous male with his insatiable lust for power, and of "Original Fear," the quality of the Female, who is the more "primitive" of the two (though why fear should be more primitive than hunger is not very apparent), and who, with the weapons of craft and dissimulation, seeks security and hence property (men never care for property, the author assures us, they care only for power). This sorry Gana is obsessed by its consciousness of War and Blood and Fate and Death and Sorrow, to each of which a chapter is devoted without advancing the central thought much further but including many really powerful descriptions of the long night of horror during which the "Yeast of Creation" boils and foams to no purpose. In this night the majority of men still dwell. And yet their essence belongs to a different world, that of Spirit, which is not, as one might hastily suppose, connected with reason or morality, both of which are still earth-bound and utilitarian, but is opposed to Nature at every point, being pure imagination, pure play, disinterested, free, and indeterminate.

This intrusion of Spirit into a hitherto naturalistic universe is left by the author an absolute miracle. However inexplicable, it is for him the most important factor in the entire process. The ability to create mental images is that which distinguishes men from the rest of creation. And the inward image, once formed, tends to recreate the outer world in accordance with itself, it becomes a model-plan which is realized in action and thus gives promise of man's increasing control of the alien Nature from which his body sprang. There is, of course, much that is psychologically sound in all this, but the metaphysics remains deplorable. Why should Nature so readily take the impress of an utterly different type of being, and why should self-sufficient, playful Spirit involve itself at all in these affairs of earth? By the antagonism which he sets up between Spirit and the vital impulses and the emotions, Count Keyserling leaves his creative spiritual force without either motive to act or means to act.

In connection with this review see the letter on page 494.



## Finding of the Snark

By ARTHUR RUHL

IT must be clearly understood at the outset that all rights and privileges in the discovery herein to be announced belong to Dean Wallace B. Donham of the Harvard School of Business Administration. He is the Columbus of this literary adventure; the writer a reluctant Boswell, or, as they put it even more bluntly in the trade, mere rewrite man.

The genesis of his connection with the subject, through correspondence growing out of a first-night review of his of "Alice in Wonderland," may be passed over in a word. Suffice it to say that Mr. Donham presently emerged as the translator of the Riddle of the Snark, a mystery which has baffled generations of Carroll addicts and in the researches of one of them (see essay by "Snarkophilus Snobbs" in special Christmas number of the *London Mind* for 1901) was held "responsible for forty-nine and one-half per cent of the cases of insanity and nervous breakdown which have occurred during the last ten years."

Dean Donham not only solves the riddle, but with a clarity and pragmatism which contrasts pleasantly with the fuzzy speculations of some of the earlier workers in this field, who endeavored to identify the Snark as Happiness or even as the Absolute, he hitches it directly to the Depression which now dismays and bewilders the entire civilized world. To put it in a word, Mr. Donham holds, and supports his thesis not only by the verses themselves but by an imposing body of scholarly research, that the Oxford Don and Lecturer in Mathematics, Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, who, as Lewis Carroll, wrote "The Hunting of the Snark" (and always kept his two personalities strictly apart) intended—in his Dodgsonian mind—the *Snark* to represent *Business*, while the *Boojum*, before which the searchers, if they ever met him, would "softly and suddenly vanish away," was nothing else than a panic, or general *Economic Crisis* such as now plagues the world and such as hit England a few years before the publication of the verses.

Now Mr. Donham, who works in economics and finance, amuses himself with Carrolliana, but can't amuse himself with the job of writing. And to write without amusement would, he seems to feel, threaten his amateur status. Sport for sport's sake. Yet the curious pertinence of his discovery seemed to demand its announcement without further delay—so much by way of apology for your correspondent's intrusion in the matter.

To revert to the modern, psychological biographical style, let us imagine the Business School dean lolling in a New York, New Haven and Hartford chair car on one of his frequent trips to and from Boston and New York. As the telegraph poles flit soothingly past, there hums through his idle mind, along with the lazy click of the rails, a slightly mournful threnody made up of the conflicting utterances from experts and those in high places in times like these:

... The salvation of Europe cannot begin until we recover from the depression, but America cannot start recovering until Europe recovers. Wages must stay up but wages must come down. Our future depends on export trade, but our future is in the home market. Standards of living must be maintained to hold or restore buyers for our goods, but standards of living are already too high, and we are living beyond our means. The farmer is potentially one of our greatest markets, but the only hope of the farmer is to return to a subsistence level where he ceases to be a customer for anything. Taxes must go up and borrowings be kept down, but increased taxes will ruin us all, and we must borrow to keep down taxes. . . .

And so on and on, until, imperceptibly, he finds himself chanting:

They roused him with muffins—they roused him with ice—  
They roused him with mustard and cress—

They roused him with jam and judicious advice—  
They set him conundrums to guess.

At this point, finding himself plump in the middle of "The Hunting of the Snark," our hero's lackadaisical manner undergoes a sudden change and he betrays all the symptoms of one seized with an Idea. He sits erect, grasps the arms of his chair, his eyes gleam, and the unusually perceptive observer might perhaps suspect a slightly derisive curl of the lip in the direction of those Cantabridgians who maintain that the Business School crowd are a lot of modernistic philistines, anyway, indifferent to belles lettres and ignorant of the higher things.

Running hastily, from memory, over the familiar Carroll quatrains, with coincidence following coincidence, he seizes pencil and paper and sets down the following translated titles and list of characters:

<i>The Hunting of the Snark</i>	=	<i>The Quest for Business</i>
(An Agony in Eight Fits)	=	(A Tragedy of the Business Cycle)
<i>Dramatis Personæ</i>		
The Snark . . . . .		Business
The Bellman . . . . .		Leaders of Business Personified
The Crew . . . . .		Miscellaneous Business Men and Laborers
The Boots . . . . .		Unskilled Labor
The Maker of Bonnets and Hoods . . . . .		Style Manufacturer for Retail Trade
The Barrister . . . . .		A Radical Agitator
The Broker . . . . .		Middleman Dealing in Commodities
The Billiard Marker . . . . .		A Speculator
The Banker . . . . .		Commercial Bankers Personified
The Beaver . . . . .		A Skilled Textile Worker
The Baker . . . . .		A Retailer in a Luxury Trade
The Butcher . . . . .		A Textile Manufacturer
The Boojum . . . . .		A Panic
The Jubjub* . . . . .		Disraeli
Hyaenas . . . . .		Stockbrokers
Bear . . . . .		Bears in the Stock Market
Judge . . . . .		A Judge Wholly Controlled by Business
Jury . . . . .		A Jury Wholly Controlled by Business
The Bandersnatch* . . . . .		The Bank of England

It is impossible to quote at any length here the lines which plausibly suggest the economic personalities of all these characters, but a reference to one or two will indicate Mr. Donham's general approach. There is the *Beaver*, for instance—

... that paced on the deck  
Or would sit making lace in the bow:  
And had often (the *Bellman* said) saved  
them from wreck  
Though none of the sailors knew how.

The *Beaver* is a textile worker, and his rather dreary, drab, and timorous role throughout the verses suggests that he might occasionally be regarded as a handicraft worker, a fish out of water in an industrialized England, yet someone to fall back on in time of need.

The *Baker*, Mr. Donham explains, is a small business man who knows no accounting or finance but works by rule of thumb; a retailer in a luxury trade, dependent on imported raw materials, but with such weak finances that his stock is always on consignment. His haphazard methods and general planlessness are explained at length in the introductory quatrains, concluding with

His form is ungainly—his intellect small—  
(So the *Bellman* would often remark)—  
But his courage is perfect! And that, after all,  
Is the thing that one needs with a *Snark*.  
(i. e., in business)

He would joke with hyaenas, returning their stare (Stockbrokers)  
With an impudent wag of the head:  
And he once went a walk, paw-in-paw,  
with a bear, (Market "bear")  
"Just to keep up its spirits," he said.

He came as a *Baker*: but owned, when too late—  
And it drove the poor *Bellman* half-mad—  
He could only bake Bride-cake—for which I may state (Luxury trade),  
No materials were to be had. (No raw materials.)

\* These two characters also appear in the "Lay of the Jabberwock."

Every reference to the *Baker* throughout the *Snark* similarly fits this type of small business-man. And so with the *Butcher* (manufacturer) "who gravely declared he could only kill *Beavers*" (skilled textile workers), the *Banker*, the *Bellman*, and the rest. Not only do the personalities fit, but all the seemingly nonsensical talk and doings of the members of the crew can as neatly be turned into the characteristic views and behavior of men in the pursuit of *Business* and in fear of a *Panic*.

Having established his characters, Carroll proceeds, in *Fit the Second*, to elaborate on typical business errors, the failure of prophecies and forecasting services, and the like:

"What's the good of Mercator's North Poles and Equators,  
Tropic Zones and Meridian lines?"  
So the *Bellman* would cry: and the crew would reply  
"They are merely conventional signs!"  
(i. e., What's the good of accounting, statistics, economics, and science?)

... But the principal failing occurred in the sailing  
And the *Bellman*, perplexed and distressed,  
Said he had hoped, at least, when the wind blew due East  
That the ship would *not* travel due West!  
(Failure of forecasting services.)

Then come various detours, palliatives, cure-alls, and the *Bellman's* warning of the danger of *Boojums* or *Panics*:

For, although common *Snarks* do no manner of harm,  
Yet I feel it my duty to say  
Some are *Boojums*— The *Bellman* broke off in alarm  
For the *Baker* had fainted away. (Small luxury-dealer terrified at the thought of economic depression.)

They roused him with muffins, they roused him with ice, they roused him with mustard and cress, and the *Baker* was finally able to tell of his uncle's warning:

"But oh, beamish nephew, beware of the day,  
If your *Snark* be a *Boojum*! For then  
You will softly and suddenly vanish away.  
And never be met with again!"

The crew continue, notwithstanding, their desperate search for *Business*. "They sought it with thimbles, they sought it with care, they pursued it with forks and hope; they threatened its life with a railway share, they charmed it with smiles and soap." The *Butcher* (manufacturer) sought to avoid labor troubles by moving his factory to the country—

... making a desperate sally  
And had fixed on a spot unfrequented by man  
A dismal and desolate valley. . . .

But the *Beaver* (labor) did the same thing:

Each thought he was thinking of nothing but "Snark"  
And the glorious work of the day:  
And each tried to pretend that he did not remark  
That the other was going that way.

But the valley grew narrow and narrower still (Business gets worse),  
And the evening grew darker and colder  
Till (merely from nervousness, not from good will) (Co-operation from nervousness not from good-will.)  
They marched along shoulder to shoulder.

Then in *Fit Five*, "a scream shrill and high, rent the shuddering sky" and the voice of the *Jubjub* was heard. The *Jubjub*, Mr. Donham believes, was undoubtedly Disraeli, Prime Minister at the time, and feared by the manufacturing classes as he was opposed by Gladstone. "Dodgson was himself a Conservative," explains Mr. Donham in his notes, "and it is not surprising to find that the description of Disraeli (in a dozen of the *Snark's* quatrains) is keen and fair as well as amusing. His capacity for invective, his loyalty to friends, his chronic lack of money, his meticulous care in accomplishing his always bizarre personal appearance, his habit of plastering his hair in ringlets, are all carefully noted."

In *Fit the Seventh*, Carroll treats of banking psychology and the wild optimism preceding the crisis of 1875, when the Bank of England—*The Bandersnatch*—several times raised its rate:

But while he was seeking with thimbles and care

A *Bandersnatch* swiftly drew nigh  
And grabbed at the *Banker*, who shrieked with despair (The Bank raised its rate, Nov. 16, 1875)  
For he knew it was useless to fly.  
He offered large discount—he offered a cheque—  
(Drawn "to bearer") for seven-pound-ten

But the *Bandersnatch* merely extended its neck  
And grabbed at the *Banker* again. (The Bank rate was raised to 8% although bankers offered 7½% in the open market.)

In *Fit the Eighth*, even the workman (*Beaver*) speculates at the top of the market, and the luxury-dealer (*Baker*), losing his head completely in the last stages of expansion, becomes the envy of all:

They gazed with delight while the *Butcher* exclaimed  
"He was always a desperate wag!"  
They beheld him—their *Baker*—their hero unnamed—  
On the top of a neighboring crag.

Erect and sublime for one moment of time  
In the next that wild figure they saw  
(As if stung by a spasm) plunge into a chasm  
While they waited and listened with awe.

The *Panic* had hit him, at last, and left not a cent for his creditors, "not a button, or feather, or mark, by which they could tell that they stood on the ground where the *Baker* had met with the *Snark*."

In the midst of a word he was trying to say,  
In the midst of his laughter and glee,  
He had softly and suddenly vanished away—  
For the *Snark* was a *Boojum*, you see.

It is impossible, of course, in the limited space available here, to quote enough of these coincidences fairly to present Mr. Donham's theory, and I can only repeat his statement that "no single quatrain in the *Snark* goes contra to the interpretation." There are, he adds, "at least three cross-references in Carroll's other writings which confirm the thesis."

One is a syllogism from "Symbolic Logic," corroborating the interpretation of *Hyaenas* as *Stockbrokers*, and stating, in effect, that "bankers always shun stockbrokers," which leads Mr. Donham to observe that "the recent financial history of the United States would be somewhat different if this syllogism had been a correct and inclusive statement of banking behaviorism."

The second cross-reference is to "The Lay of the Jabberwock," in which both the *Jubjub* bird and the *Bandersnatch* appear, and in the preface to which Carroll remarks that the *Snark* "is to some extent connected with the Lay of the Jabberwock." After researches into early Carrolliana and into the history of the time too extensive to be gone into here, Mr. Donham found reason for thinking that the *Jabberwock* was intended to represent the Corn Laws. Carroll had personal as well as political reasons for admiring Peel and approved of his fight, against the bitter opposition of Disraeli, for the final repeal of the Corn Laws. It is the Queen who, in verses, warns of the political trouble involved, in the lines:

Beware the *Jabberwock*, my son!  
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!  
Beware the *Jubjub* bird, and shun,  
The frumious *Bandersnatch*!  
(Beware the Corn Law controversy, Disraeli's opposition, and the financial questions bound up with the controversy over the Bank of England.)

And when Peel, facing the issue nevertheless, accomplished the repeal of the Corn Laws, the Queen gives him her praise and he exults:

And hast thou slain the *Jabberwock*?  
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!  
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!"  
He chortled in his joy.

The third cross-check is in "Through the Looking-glass" itself. It is generally recognized that Tenniel's drawing of the Gentleman in White Paper sitting opposite Alice in the railway carriage is a caricature of Disraeli. The appropriateness of "white paper" as the costume of a diplomat and Prime Minister is apparent enough and the whole conversation about economy (in government) suits the period. Still more in character is the White Paper  
(Continued on next page)