

A Ghost-Ridden Artist

GERALD: A PORTRAIT. By Daphne du Maurier. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1935. \$3.

Reviewed by CLAYTON HAMILTON

IT was in London in the spring of 1910—now a quarter of a century ago—that I first met Gerald du Maurier. At that time his second daughter, Daphne, could scarcely have been more than two or three years old. I did not meet her then. I should like to meet her now.

In that season, Gerald du Maurier was appearing in an importation from America, entitled "Alias Jimmy Valentine," which had been dramatized by Paul Armstrong from a short story by O. Henry. One episode of this play was set in an office of a bank in Springfield, Illinois; and, during the course of this scene, the leading actor signed several papers with a quill pen. After witnessing his performances with unqualified appreciation, I reminded du Maurier, in his dressing-room, that quill pens had been obsolete in the United States since the somewhat distant days of George Washington, and advised him to buy a fountain-pen for service as a "prop" in the subsequent performances.

Du Maurier accepted this suggestion with good grace; and as he smiled, I became conscious of his overmastering charm. He was not, by any commonly accepted standards, a good-looking man. His profile was irregular and by no means classical. His full face was disappointing because of his somewhat twisted and retroverted nose. His physical proportions were not at all impressive. And yet it was a fact that, in the theatre, the feminine public preferred him without question to any of the handsome young men who, in that period, were labelled as "matinee idols."

As a visiting American, I mused upon



DAPHNE DU MAURIER

this mystery and wondered if there might be some validity to the British legend of ancestral aristocracy. I do not wonder any more: for Daphne du Maurier has proved, in the third generation, that there is such a thing as family. Her intimate portrait of her father is not a "theatrical" biography of the customary type. It is scarcely a biography at all. Instead, it is a document far richer in its human content than the average novel that is acclaimed by the plaudits of popular appreciation. For Daphne du Maurier can write:—make no mistake about that! If her grandfather—who was known to his intimates by the nickname of "Kicky"—had survived to read this book, he would have tossed back his great head in noble laughter and would have shouted,—"Gloire à toi, ma petite petite!"

There must be something to this fetish of a family, after all. First came old "Kicky" who was one of the greatest draughtsmen of his time, and who, very late in life, wrote two imperishable novels, "Peter Ibbetson" and "Trilby." His elder son, Major Guy du Maurier, D.S.O., wrote one of the most significant plays of his period, "An Englishman's Home," before he was killed in action in the Great War which he had prophesied. And "Kicky's" younger son, Gerald, who had taken up the art of acting because it seemed less burdensome to him than any other occupation, was ultimately knighted, and

ended his career as one of the foremost actors of the English-speaking stage.

Sir Gerald's daughter, Daphne—who has been recognized already as the author of three novels—has now written a book about that spoiled child who was her father which must be accepted as a veritable work of art. She understands his weaknesses as well as she appreciates his ingratiating qualities; and her judgment is utterly unprejudiced. She is wise beyond her generation in her appreciation of that graciousness which has been lost beyond recovery amid the many tortures of these current times. She has written a beautiful book,—simple, tender, touching, and true.

The Upper Crust

IN THEIR OWN IMAGE. By Hamilton Basso. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1935. \$2.50.

Reviewed by JONATHAN DANIELS

IF I am not mistaken, somebody else pointed out before that it takes all kinds of people to make a world. It is still true and perhaps even interestingly true to consider that the country about Augusta, Georgia, which Erskine Caldwell peopled with his poor whites, is the same country in which Hamilton Basso writes of his poor rich. For not only is Augusta the city of folk who live on Ty Ty Walden's pitted farm, but also of the folk who bring their polo ponies to their palaces in Aiken. Furthermore, if we may credit Mr. Basso's words in contempt for those who are at the very top of the American social order, Mr. Erskine's Ty Ty and Darling Jill are not characters restricted to the American lower depths. There is little to choose between them and Mr. Basso's Benita Sturme and Lane Officer.

The analogy between the two books will go further than their pages. Just as there were plenty of good Southern folk who resented both Mr. Caldwell's realistic picture of men and women caught in Southern poverty, stupidity, and lack of morals and his refusal to be solemn about it, there will be others who will resent Mr. Basso's perhaps too solemn, often sentimental, condemnation of the stupidly superior rich in nearby Aiken.

There is nothing new about Mr. Basso's indignation. Back into antiquity those whose riches permitted them to grow fat, not only in body but in head, have been the target of writers and philosophers and reformers. Probably there never has been a time when there were not well-fed parasites and young men to damn them. Mr. Basso's current and well-written indignation has special point only because of the spectacle of fat, stupid living in the midst of the depression in Aiken beside the underpaid and undernourished life in the mill village of Berrytown ten miles away.

But whether or not Mr. Basso has brought to literature anything fresh or new, he has written an interesting tale of an American family flung up by quick riches, made out of a good mayonnaise and a better advertising campaign, to a point where they are able to climb into Society. But only by the help of old hard-headed and crooked-necked Pierson James, the advertising man who shouted the family mayonnaise on to millions, are they able to escape and then only after death and scandal.

Mr. Basso has in this new novel left the rich old South of his biography of Beauregard and the new South changing with pain of his "Cinnamon Seed" but, despite his desertion, it is his occasional recurrence to the traditions of the South and discussions of it that give this book such distinction as it possesses. If he proves that the parasites at the financial top of our social order are sickening fools, it is but cumulative evidence of a long proved fact. And he does not serve that proof by failing to present any figures of intelligence or worth among the rich, save perhaps John Pine, who being a painter and an artist, succeeded, as he says himself, in escaping. There is some excellent writing in the book, some interesting discussion of this American variety of the ancient paarsite, but as a whole the book does not add substantially to the world's total of either indignation or art.

Journey in Search of a Civilization

PROVENCE. By Ford Madox Ford. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co. 1935. \$3.

FORD MADOX FORD has written a travel book that is much less concerned with geography than with civilization—and with civilization in the personal, not the archeological, sense. He gives us the record of a journey in search of an intellectual climate where a civilized modern man can feel at home, and he has found it in Provence. Perhaps he prefers thirteenth century Provence, with the great trade route and the Courts of Love, to anywhere else; but still modern Provence is pretty good. Geography does get into this travel book where there is a



FORD MADOX FORD

On the porch of his house in Provence.

chance for a good description; and history where it is interesting, as most of Provençal history is, from the Albigenses to "Tartarin of Tarascon." He talks about the influence of cafés on art, about the influence of bull-fighting on politics, about everything that comes into his head, and he is always delightful.

By no means all the book is about Provence; it is a book of digressions, like "A Sentimental Journey," and Mr. Ford is almost as subjective as Sterne. When the occasion arises to talk about cooking, or London fogs, or Pre-Raphaelites, as it often does, Mr. Ford talks of them with gusto and relish. But his center of gravity is in Provence.

Mr. Ford's book is guaranteed to make every Francophile homesick; and it ought to make a Francophile of everybody who reads it.

A Puzzled American

PUZZLED AMERICA. By Sherwood Anderson. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1935. \$2.50.

Reviewed by LOUIS ADAMIC

SHERWOOD ANDERSON, who has written all sorts of books, all of them about America and himself, and he is a very American fellow, is just the writer to write about the American people today, in the fifth year of the depression, which is still a puzzle to them and is but part of the greater puzzle that is life in America. Mr. Anderson, this American from the Middle West, has been going about the country and among the people, mostly the so-called plain people, and has been writing pieces about this puzzle in the magazine *Today*, which is edited by Professor Raymond Moley, who is also somewhat of a puzzle. He has been writing pieces, long and short but mostly short—too short—about the CCC boys, the miners in the South, the mill people in the South, the run-down "first families" in Virginia, a young fellow by the name of Rush Holt whom the people of West Virginia elected United States Senator at the age of twenty-nine, the unemployed laborers, the rebelling farmers in the Northwest, the red-headed governor of Minnesota, and several other groups and individuals. And now he has put all those pieces into a book and called it "Puzzled America." It's a good title. It describes the book. But when I first glimpsed the dust-cover around the book, I read the title to be "Puzzled Sherwood Anderson."

Sherwood Anderson is a very much

puzzled man. He has been puzzled about nearly everything ever since he forsook his paint factory, or whatever it was, in Ohio and took to writing. Maybe before that. I suppose he'll be puzzled for the rest of his days. And the chances are that he'll never contribute a whit toward the solution of the puzzle, unless describing the puzzle is a contribution.

In Memoriam:

Edwin Arlington Robinson

By LOUIS V. LEDOUX

EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON, who died on the fifth of April, 1935, for the past few years has been almost universally acclaimed the foremost of America's living poets. Time, aided by the mature and unemotional judgment of his peers, will assign to Mr. Robinson his place; but in the few lines that can be written now while the presses wait one who has lost a friend would prefer to try to speak of the very human man who has gone rather than of the work that lives.

In this brief moment only the friend can be remembered; the gentleman of quiet humor, of subtle intuitions; the man who could be trusted to be loyal and who in all the give and take of life never failed in that kindness of judgment which though it was in essence an expression of his own marked personality, yet was based on an intuitive and sympathetic understanding of all that is most pathetically human,—the possibilities of good in what seems evil, the thwarted hopes and unfulfilled aspirations of the people he knew or imagined. In nearly thirty years of intimacy the writer of these lines cannot recall an instance in which Robinson's attitude toward a fellow-mortal, or even a fellow-poet, was anything but kindly; and even the most unnecessary of us he looked on with the same whimsical and patient tolerance that radiated from him, years ago, when a certain irrepressible Airedale puppy persisted in untying his shoe laces. In those days he visited sometimes in October where there were children who adopted him as "Uncle E. A.," because he was the carver of magical Hallow-e'en pumpkins; for though his work was to him the one thing for which he lived, he never lost his ability to enter into the lives of others,—and that, whatever he may have been as a poet, was a mark of greatness in the man.

So far as he himself was concerned, his work was all in all; and those who knew this trait in him will be glad that a few hours before he lapsed into final unconsciousness he was able to hand his publisher the poem completed last autumn and recently read over during painless



EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON

hours in the sunlight of his hospital room. After that he talked briefly with three or four old friends and smoked a last cigarette with one of them whose final memory of "E. A." is of a man still smiling at something that had been said and who knew that his work had been conscientiously accomplished. It is a picture that should lessen the sorrow of many who held him dear and perhaps will help to make his personality more clear to that far greater circle of those who knew him and now can know him only in his work.

Louis V. Ledoux, himself a poet, has been a friend of Edwin Arlington Robinson for many years.

A Scientist's Story

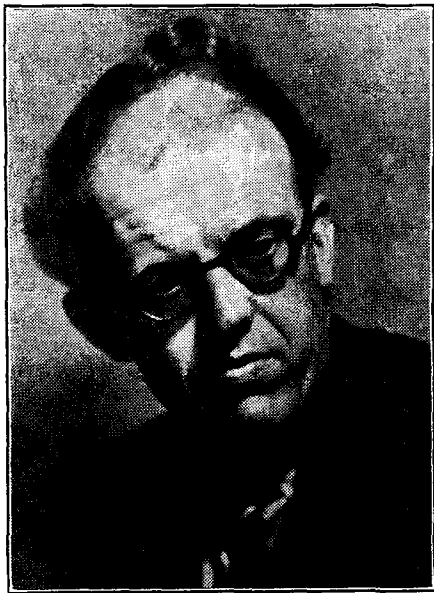
THE SEARCH. By C. P. Snow. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company. 1935. \$2.50.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

THIS is the first novel by Doctor Snow that I have read. He has, it seems, appeared twice before in England with a mystery story and an imaginative tale of the future. But "The Search" is the straightaway story of a life and a life's work. The author, at the age of thirty, has made a distinguished reputation for himself in science. He is a Fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge, and University demonstrator there in physical chemistry. It is not strange, therefore, that he has chosen, as the protagonist of his novel, a young man who adopts science as a career.

Dr. Snow's book is superior to the average modern novel in that it deals more with the intellect and less with the purely emotional and physical than most of them do. In fact it is hard now to find a modern novel not designed primarily for the excitement of the senses—all very well in its way, but monotonous. After all, H. G. Wells used to write novels that never forgot the senses and yet also exercised the intellect. Not that Dr. Snow is any Wells! The greater writer had always a style. Dr. Snow has little style, though he has praiseworthy clarity. He is inclined to get both too dry and too wordy. But such integrity of purpose is in his novel that one is inclined to forgive him even the pretty tedious portion—to a layman—dealing with the formation of the Biophysical Institute. I began to skip, in through there. In general, however, this story of a young scientist, the course of whose life and whose analytical mind finally forced him outside the periphery of pure science into the compromising chaos of human existence (and yet content, withal) holds the attention; and the human course of the man's love is interesting and convincing.

Arthur Miles's passion for science began early in life, much like a passion for poetry. He became a young man intensely ambitious to add some notable discoveries to those of the past. He was of a post-war world. He made friends with two particular men whose lives affected his thereafter; the undependable Sheriff, the pondering Hunt. He fell in love with Audrey Tennant, and should have married her, save that his career stood in the way. A revolution in scientific method suddenly balked his career as a crystallographer. The work of the future, in his field, seemed now obviously in the hands of the



C. P. SNOW

mathematicians, and Miles had had only the perfunctory mathematics of a physicist. So he accepted a readership at University College, London, where he worked comfortably and successfully, until another shock came to him, the realization that his friend, Constantine, had suddenly achieved the fame Miles had always desired. The subsequent formation of a Biophysical Institute involved Miles as the logical person for its director; but a most unfortunate bit of carelessness on his part, in a scientific experiment, put him out of the running. After this new shock he debated his future at some length. Finally he fell in love with a sympathetic woman

of means, and left active scientific work. Later on there came a chance to help Sheriff, his friend, who had married Miles's first love and mistress, Audrey. In the course of helping Sheriff, Miles's detachment from pure science became final.

Most interesting is Miles's analysis of his own attitude toward science. What did it represent to him? Benefitting the world? No, that reason had never existed for him. Did science represent truth? Within its own field, yes; but the limits remained. He finally decided that science to him was simply a valid pleasure, with moments of ecstasy in youth.

This novel has both depth and breadth. It is also instinct with drama at the four or five turning-points that arise in Miles's life. The final situation, indeed, in regard to Sheriff, might be effectively made the final act of a play. The book is somewhat cluttered with disquisition, but the scientific matters are so outlined for the layman as to appear quite clear. Also, one feels a general lack of buncombe about this novel, where so much modern work is sensational. Furthermore, contemporary thought is in it, with prophecy of change. Dr. Snow is of a younger generation than mine, and his world is quite different from the scientific world of H. G. Wells. But his account of it should perform a similar service for younger people now trying to think things through.

Innocent Bystander

TALK UNITED STATES! By Robert Whitcomb. New York: Smith & Haas. 1935. \$2.

Reviewed by JOHN T. WINTERICH

IF a copy of this hard-bitten, picaresque chronicle were sealed in the cornerstone of a durable edifice it might conceivably emerge, two or ten centuries hence, as the most revealing fragment of Americana concerned with the muddle that is our time.

It would be valuable then, as it is valuable now, both for what it has to say and for the manner of the saying. "These United States!" is the story of the rise and fall of Matt Williams, bricklayer. Born in Hoboken, reared in Flatbush and the Bronx, he swings aboard the business cycle on an *Evening World* delivery wagon, devotes his *Wanderjahr* to beating his way to the Coast and shipping to South Africa, becomes a bricklayer in Chicago, marries, enlists in the army, returns to brick-slitting at \$18.75 a day, tightens his belt when the pinch comes and sees his home stripped of its instalment gadgets, loses the home, puts wife and child in storage, hits the trail again, learns the ways of hobo jungles the country over, develops a contemptuous rage for the system that has beaten him down, and stands forth at the end as swashbuckling apostle not of a new deal but of a new deck for labor. Mr. Whitcomb's recital seems to me to lose some of its poignancy and appeal when it deliquesces from a moving machine-age Odyssey into a tract, but the shift affects only the last dozen pages (admittedly no mean segment of any book), and the desperate implacability of the narrative carries through.

All of this is set down in what to me has the ring of authentic United States—the patois of industrial America. Of its accuracy every reader is permitted to be his own judge; he will at least concede, I think, that no one has rendered our dominant post-war speech with such effortless consistency as Mr. Whitcomb.

Mr. Whitcomb's lapses are the more annoying by reason of their infrequency. "He got arrested more times than Al Capone, Ponzi, Lenin, and the Count of Monte Cristo all rolled into one" is the sequential patter of the pulp humorist, and although Matt Williams read the pulps he would never talk pulp. And I am confused by Mr. Whitcomb's internal italicization; it is moderately patronizing to Matt Williams: asparagass, hisself, thunk, reely. The self-consciousness that here intrudes is the perquisite of Mr. Whitcomb, not of Matt Williams. Left to himself, Matt Williams exhibits such a convincing grasp of his medium that the reader forgets the medium. And he tells a good story. It is the saga of an innocent bystander.

Grim, Good Scotland

GREY GRANITE. By Lewis Grassie Gibbon. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1935. \$2.50.

Reviewed by BASIL DAVENPORT

THIS is the concluding volume of the trilogy in which the late Mr. Gibbon set himself to portray the life of Lowland Scotland through the present century, and its drift toward the cities. Of the earlier two it will be remembered that "Sunset Song" dealt with the country, and "Cloud Howe" with the villages; "Grey Granite" is laid in a city, Duncairn, of which we are told that is not Aberdeen nor Edinburgh nor any other, but one like them all. They are all haunting books, written in a Scottish dialect, and much of them in a kind of indirect discourse by some imaginary observer, that mesmerizes the reader, making him feel not so much that he is witnessing the story, but that he has witnessed and is remembering it. Though here one must enter a protest against the excessive use

of the second person singular as a vehicle for the stream of consciousness. When, as happens here, "You" means the Chorus in one paragraph and Chris Colquhoun in the next, the result is a brief but annoying confusion. Nevertheless, the style as a whole is justified; after a year and more, these books are still haunting in the memory.

Yet they are dour books; at best their beauty is that of rocky hills under rainy skies; and they grow more and more dour as they go on. (It is worth noting that in "Grey Granite" two-thirds of the dialect words must be terms of abuse.) It is natural, for we are getting away from the country into the squalid city where men are "too unhappy to be kind." Except for Chris, the heroine of the first two books, her son Ewan, and one or two others, every one in Duncairn is either silly and shallow to the point where silliness becomes positively sinful, or else cruel with the causeless cruelty of school-boys.

Their cruelty is almost too much for Ewan, the central figure of the story. At first he is the serious, straightforward little boy of "Cloud Howe" grown up to fulfill his promise. He is grave, intelligent, disciplined, he has work he enjoys, he understands and controls his own emotions; if he is narrow, unable to see anything in the past but its oppressions, that narrowness is part of his perfect efficiency, like the narrowness of a racing shell. One feels at first that he is one of those who are to inherit the earth. But the spite and foulness and cruelty of Duncairn are too much even for him; they change him from a reasoned socialist into an emotional communist. That is a solution for him, but it is no solution for Duncairn; for it is plain that he has embraced communism exactly as in another century he would have embraced Calvinism, as a consistent scheme of the universe which promises salvation for an indefinite future and employs all the energies at present. But let communism win in practice, as the Covenant won in practice, and the souls of Duncairn would find they needed another scheme of salvation.

And what of Chris, Ewan's mother, whom we have seen developing into a figure who has the rich serenity of a Demeter? Chris is—herself; *Medea superset*; and, for *Medea*, it is enough. There are such people, as the Woman of Andros knew, "a few mysterious exceptions who seem to be in possession of some secret from the gods"; and from their presence,

in life or books, one can catch something of their calm. But in this last volume Chris is much in the background; she keeps to those heights she is used to seek, to look down tolerantly on mankind. There is something divine about her, but it is as unhelpful as the divinities of Lucretius. Yet, at least, for the close Chris takes us out of the filthy streets of Duncairn, to where we can hear, in the darkness, the sound of the lapwings going by. There is always the grim, good country of Scotland; that one remembers, and will remember, from these comfortless, resolute books.

Escape to Civilization

THE PUMPKIN COACH. By Louis Paul. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1935. \$2.50.

Reviewed by ALVAH C. BESSIE

M. R. PAUL has performed an entertaining tour de force; reversing one of the many formulae for romantic fiction (the office-worker's dream of escape to an idyllic island in the South Seas), he has taken a South Sea Islander, Uan Koé, who from boyhood had dreamed of coming to the United States. This country had represented to him an escape from the boredom of life on his idyllic island. He was an educated boy; Father Francis had taught him English, French, the rudiments of history, science, poetry. He saved money from trading in copra and pink pearls, and he came.

To Uan—soon, out of consideration for the

American tongue, he called himself John—and to his credit, the United States remained a vast, romantic dream, and this despite the many episodes he went through that might have disenchanted him. He obeyed the impulse to swim naked in the Pacific with a young lady (she had really suggested it herself), and was thrown in jail; the young lady's brother and three other thugs tracked him down and beat him up for having "made so much trouble for my sister." He had one adventure after another until finally he fell in love, worked as an orderly in a hospital, and ended up by exploiting what was practically his only talent aside from swimming—the ability to use his fists.

Throughout these many experiences that brought him from the West coast to the East as hobo, day-laborer, and bus-traveler, he retained his native charm, and this charm which Mr. Paul has adeptly cast about him and his adventures, will remain long in the most casual reader's memory. It makes the book, for there is little enough substance for the reader to get hold of, and while it is not possible legitimately to quarrel with an author for the attitude out of which he has created a piece of work, it is possible to regret that he could not, if only momentarily, delve beyond the surface of his fable. He has here woven a pleasant Cinderella legend that will amuse and frequently delight; but he has offered ample evidence that he is capable of more than entertainment, more than a bitter-sweet satire on the ambiguities of life in this country. He has an accurate ear for the American idiom, a keen eye for the American countryside; the long passages that involve John's relationship with "Hunk" Haley, the migratory laborer who took him under his wing and taught him to use his dukes, are instinct with a sure feeling for human character that is deeper than any fairy tale; he has an alert mind and a feeling for the places he has seen and the people he has known.



LOUIS PAUL

Winner of 1934 O. Henry Memorial story prize. "The Pumpkin Coach" is his first novel.