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We also announce for publication in the Autumn of 1935, "The Pursuit of Laughter"

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225 Signs of Better Business...

Bookshops are reporting that they enjoyed the best Christmas season in years, and *The Saturday Review* is opening new accounts almost every day. The new books already announced by the publishers seem unusually interesting. But the best sign of all is one which calls attention to the *Review*. Made of metal enameled in three colors, it will sell both single copies and subscriptions. The size is 13¼ x 5¾ inches, and it may be hung in the window, on the wall or bulletin board. It also has an easel so that it may be set up on the counter beside copies of the magazine. This effective sign will be mailed upon request, post-paid with our compliments, to any bookseller selling the *Review*. We manufactured 225, but they're going fast. Write for yours, today, to:

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THE SATURDAY REVIEW

25 West 45th Street, New York City

The People's Language

A DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN SLANG. By Maurice H. Weseen. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co. 1934. \$2.50.

Reviewed by JOHN S. KENYON

THIS compilation, said to contain 15,000 entries, is designed to be a collection of current American slang. It is classified into the slang of (1) Crooks and Criminals, (2) Hoboes and Tramps, (3) Railroaders, (4) Loggers and Miners, (5) Oil Drillers, (6) Cowboys and Westerners, (7) Soldiers, (8) Sailors, (9) Aviators, (10) The Theater, (11) Circus and Carnival, (12) Radio, (13) College, (14) Baseball, (15) Football, (16) Boxing and Prizefighting, (17) Sports, (18) Drinking, (19) Eating, (20) Money, and (21) General Slang. It is provided with a good index, and is on the whole an excellent and useful pioneer work. The author states that he includes only current slang, not slang that is obsolete or that has passed into good use. He includes technical jargon of trades and occupations only if it "is really slang." He emphasizes both the ephemeral nature of slang and its contributions to standard speech. And he recognizes the difficulties of such a work—difficulties greater than the inexperienced realize—without predecessors to build on, as the ordinary lexicographer has.

I do not wish the few criticisms that follow to obscure my recognition of the importance of Professor Weseen's work or of the difficulties in thus mapping out a new and important field of linguistic study. I hope that at some future time the author will greatly increase the length of his valuable introduction, telling us more of his methods of gathering information and of the significance of his classifications. For in some instances words appear to be classed according to their origin as slang, and in others according to the prevailing use of them. Many examples are placed only in the special groups which appear to be in general slang use, such as *all wet* ("mistaken"), *blow in* ("arrive"), *boat* ("automobile"), *buggy* ("automobile"), *bum* ("inferior"), *broke*, etc. At any rate I have known most of these terms since boyhood, but never associated them with the groups to which the author attributed them. Perhaps he intended to suggest the group with which they originated, but in many other cases he lists words both in the special and the general groups, so that we must infer that he does not regard the foregoing as general.

For purposes of classification there is needed a more precise definition of slang than Mr. Weseen gives. Though he names several features of slang, he fails to give us a criterion, for example to distinguish slang from dialect and low colloquial speech (illiterate, etc.). I shall attempt the definition no farther than to say that a word is slang or not according to the speaker's intention. A genuine dialect word may become slang by the user's intention, as when a cultivated speaker applies the word *innards* to the stomach and intestines with a slang intention. But when the partly literate farmer uses it of a butchered animal, it is not slang but simple dialect. The hobo word *exhibition* ("hand-out") curiously enough is used in its original sense, and *let slide* (now slang) dates from Chaucer.

Other expressions, striking or humorous metaphors, but without the slang intention, are doubtfully to be classed as slang; as *bee-line*, *blockhead* (since 1549), *bury the hatchet*, etc.

Some examples are not genuine slang or dialect, but merely spelling-slang, phonetic or humorous spellings of ordinary words; as *bunkum*, *movienthusiast*, *rassel* ("wrestle"), *sez*, *punkin*—a standard pronunciation to which Fowler's sensible comment applies: "We deserve not praise but censure if we decline to accept the popular pronunciation of popular words."

It is inevitable that a first edition will

miss some words. The following belong in the book: *coop* (for co-op), *cut a splurge*, *dude ranch*, *hot oil* (produced beyond legal quota), *nut* ("insane person"), *nigger off* ("burn [logs] in two"), *onto* ("aware of"), *stick-up*, *n* ("hold-up"), *stick 'em up* ("hands up!"), *wapper-jawed*.

A defect of Mr. Weseen's book is the failure to indicate pronunciation, at least in doubtful cases, such as *hist man*, *slough*, and *bee-line* (accent). Such deficiencies as I have mentioned will, no doubt, be corrected in a later edition, with, let us hope, a fuller introduction.

John S. Kenyon is a member of the English department of Hiram College.

Scenario into Book

THE MIGHTY BARNUM (A SCREEN PLAY). By Gene Fowler and Bess Meredyth. New York: Covici-Friede. 1934. \$2.

Reviewed by NIVEN BUSCH, JR.

THERE is no department in any book review for reviewing screen plays. This is not surprising, as "The Mighty Barnum" is as far as I know the first screen play that has ever been published. Read this review carefully, because it is undoubtedly making history: it may be the basis of a new technique of criticism which the future will bring forth to deal with such books, and in which a standard will be established for appraising the author's cuts and lap dissolves and according his dialogue its rightful place in the glittering world of esthetics. Of course, screen plays are reviewed, but only after they have been translated into celluloid: until then nobody reads them except stenographers, script girls, and harassed directors who cover their margins with obscure, indignant blue-pencils: actors and producers also carry them around; but it has long been a tradition of the industry that these two professional classes do not know how to read.

But the importance of "The Mighty Barnum" is that it is a book. In its doughty green, red, and yellow cover it joins the slender company of literary pioneers. Incidentally I take pleasure in reporting that it tells a swaggering story of the late Phineas T. Barnum, and his lifelong dedication to the public's gullibility. How he got into show business with his Gallery of Freaks, how he formed a partnership with a man named Bailey Walsh, who afterward became his partner in the Barnum & Bailey circus; all this, together with his relationship, gustily romanticized, with Jenny Lind, the Swedish Nightingale, is related here. It is a literate but by no means a literary piece of work. The imminence of a cloth binding did not seem to intimidate authors Gene Fowler and Bess Meredyth.

Two years ago Doubleday, Doran had a scheme to issue a selection of "Best Screen Plays of the Year" in an abbreviated form corresponding to the current anthologies of stage plays. The idea was dropped because of copyright difficulties. "The Mighty Barnum" may serve to revive it, if only as an experiment in discovering whether people are interested in printed examples of motion picture technique. Certainly, until you are familiar with it, the technique comes between you and the story being told, but the trick of mastering it is easy and consists of projecting the flow of broken scenes into a smooth current sliding over an imaginary screen. Once this is done it is easy to enjoy to the full such really side-splitting sequences as that in which Barnum is trying to find out whether his bearded lady is a man or a woman.

I hope "The Mighty Barnum" sells a lot of copies. It is the book world's first grudging acknowledgment that its little brother the cinema is growing out of short pants.

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
MURDER MASQUERADE Inez Haines Irwin (Smith & Haas: \$2.)	Masker at New England party found stabbed to death. Nice Irish cop solves the puzzle.	Well told yarn, with charming little girl sub-detective and lots of nice people hiding unpleasant pasts.	Engaging
THE DIAMOND RANSOM MURDERS Nellise Child (Knopf: \$2.)	Kidnaping, ransom, murder, and blackmail of assortment of cushy Californians straightened out by Jerry Irish.	Conglomerate of excitement weakened by diffuse writing and confused plot, but with swell wind-up.	Passable

The Poems of the Brontës

THE POEMS OF CHARLOTTE BRONTË AND PATRICK BRANWELL BRONTË. THE POEMS OF EMILY JANE BRONTË AND ANNE BRONTË. (The Shakespeare Head Brontë.) Edited by Thomas James Wise and John Alexander Symington. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1934. 2 vols. \$16.

Reviewed by ABBÉ DIMNET

CHARLOTTE BRONTË died in 1855. Her husband, Mr. Nicholls, inherited her property, including her rights and a huge, nondescript mass of MSS. which Mrs. Gaskell saw while preparing her life of Charlotte and to which she did not attach much importance. In 1861 old Mr. Brontë died and Mr. Nicholls went back to his native Ireland, carrying with him the said MSS. as well as various Brontë relics.

Charlotte was not the only author of those MSS.; many of them were the work of her sisters or of Branwell. There were also letters from various correspondents. In our days it is probable that the biographer of a writer like Charlotte Brontë would have all such documents copied, while critics would not be long collating the copies with the originals. But Mrs. Gaskell was not the woman to do that; critics unfortunately waited for the second growth of the Brontë fame; and Mr. Nicholls, judging by his treatment of the portrait now in the National Portrait Gallery, seems to have had no idea of the value of the treasures he possessed. In time he began to sell individual MSS. to collectors, and pretty soon they were scattered all over the world.

A disastrous situation, of course. As the reputation of the Brontës became more secure, collectors felt in duty bound not to keep what they possessed from the public. But these so-called editions were strictly for private circulation and seldom numbered more than twenty-five or thirty copies. Sometimes an unpublished poem would have a slightly better chance in the press or through the Brontë Society, but the melancholy truth is that so far the publishers of the Brontë works have been chiefly autograph-hunters. Even the large edition published in New York in 1902 by Dodd, Mead & Co. was limited to 110 copies, one of which somehow found its way to me. The poems of Emily, very badly edited by Clement Shorter (1910), with a ridiculous introduction by W. Robertson Nicoll, did not exceed a thousand copies. Nor did, I think, the excellent edition of Charlotte's poems by Clement Shorter and that great Brontë scholar, C. W. Hatfield (1923). And the tendency is so strong that even the two volumes I am dealing with are also for comparatively private circulation: five hundred copies for England and five hundred for America.

These are two substantial, handsomely presented volumes, to the second of which are added invaluable facsimiles of the MSS. of Emily and Anne in Sir Alfred Law's Honresfeld collection: what they are from the point of view of scholarship remains to be said.

They offer us a good text, which is no small praise when one knows how difficult Brontë MSS. are, and how badly even such a piece as "No coward soul is mine" was treated by Charlotte. Readers of *The Nineteenth Century and After* cannot have forgotten the masterly article by Mr. Davidson Cook, published in this *Review* in 1926.

Several wrong attributions, for instance of poems by Branwell or Anne ascribed to Emily, have been corrected. Finally we have here a tremendous increase of Branwell and Anne material, Anne's poems filling 112 pages, while Branwell's spread to 177, not including the translation of Horace's "Odes," published a few years ago by Mr. Drinkwater. As for Charlotte, many readers will be surprised to find that addition after addition has swelled the collection she herself published in 1846 to 251 pages, and Angrian material, wisely reserved by the editors for future volumes, might have made her share even larger.

Here it is that we begin to wonder. Nobody can find fault with the Shakespeare Head editors for trying to be complete, but we sincerely regret that their object does not seem anywhere to have been critical. The autograph-hunter tradition has been at work again. What is good, what is indifferent in that enormous production? Mr. Drinkwater thinks that Branwell is the second best poet of the family, and he is right, but is Branwell nearer to Emily than he is to the other two? I have noted

passages in the new material which have the Emily ring or recall Emily's peculiar emotion. But how few! And how often, on the contrary, Branwell's facility turns out to be the merely verbal fluidity of the versifier! But the old habit of judging the Brontës emotionally—that is to say, from infantile preferences aired in every-day conversations by people who should have no vote—is sure to reappear. Branwell just now is the beneficiary of a reaction against the misjudgments piled on him as well as on his father. People may deduce from the quantity of his output as to the quality of his inspiration. They will not find a word in these volumes to counteract such an impression. Many reviewers are not, cannot be Brontë specialists; they will have to steer through these books with their general notions of English literature. It is astonishing that we should hardly find an allusion to the Brontë literary models. On the other hand, people on the lookout for cheap originality will have innumerable chances to build on a hemistich whole theories about the lives of the Brontës.

The editors may plead that publishing is not necessarily literature and that, at all events, they have given us orderly material. It is true. One ought to be thankful to them for the chronological order of the poems. But even this arrangement raises many questions which remain unanswered. Chronology would obviously be vastly helped by indications of location which we constantly miss. This is most important in the case of Emily (remember the controversy about the "alien fire" which was not the Hegers' fire), or in the case of Branwell. One interesting indication in this edition concerns a trip of his—unknown to me—to North Wales in 1845. Another, psychologically important, concerns an impromptu he is said to have written while sulking away from his friends, a strange source of inspiration, but one which seems undeniable.

The most immediate need for Brontë students is undoubtedly a synchronized table of their movements in connection with their production. Working recently at the British Museum Library on lectures intended to bring my book on the Brontës up to date, I felt the need of such a table at every moment. One man could make it as accurate and minute as it can ever be hoped to be made, that is Mr. Hatfield. But I am surprised that some American scholar has not as yet taken advantage of a Guggenheim fellowship to start on this essential piece of work. It should be accompanied by a critical apparatus, of course. The Shakespeare Head editors think, contrary to Charlotte's assertion, that "No coward soul is mine" was written three years before Emily's death. But not a word will they give us in support of this conjecture, which the mere inspection of the MS. leads one to think is well-founded. In the same way, people who have not had the same chances as these editors to go over the juvenile attempts known as the Angria or Gondal materials are disappointed to find themselves confronted by many puzzling allusions.

So, there is still hanging over the Brontë studies the old discouraging veil of incompleteness of apparatus, and we do not know which is its worse consequence, the hesitancy of serious scholars or the charlatanism of fantastic hypotheses. The poor Brontës have reasons to envy writers whom good critical editions protect against such dangers. This means that a final edition of the Brontës has yet to be prepared, and it ought to be prepared while Mr. Wise and Mr. Hatfield are alive on lines which so far do not seem to have attracted the former.

There exists a model, but to my knowledge only one, and that is the selection of the Brontë poems given, in 1915, by A. C. Benson. Here was the beginning of really sympathetic and illuminating criticism. Here the literary man finds himself, in spite of many questions unanswered, in a congenial atmosphere.

We owe the Shakespeare Head editors two things: first, the end of haphazard Brontë publishing which had been going on for eighty years, and second, the admirable facsimiles at the end of the second volume. I do not mean that these photostats will enable a few of us to make up our minds about divergent readings of Emily's poems and her haughty way of treating minor details, but that they will enable all of us to get at once infinitely nearer to Emily and Anne, the women, than has been possible till now. That is literature, as a good portrait is psychology.

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT is reading it!

EXCERPT FROM FEATURE ARTICLE IN FEBRUARY ISSUE OF REAL AMERICA, ENTITLED "IN THE WHITE HOUSE WITH PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT."

Two books lay on his desk, both of which gave evidence of a careful reading.

One of these was *The Open Door at Home*, by Charles A. Beard, eminent American historian.

On the flyleaf of the Beard book was scrawled numerous figures in the President's handwriting, and the words, "Beard's ideal bad dish with more goods must be produced." The words appeared to be disconnected phrases.

All through the book certain passages were underlined. These words, for example, on page 124:

"The world economic order, on examination, does not take on the appearances assumed in classical economy."

Then, on page 95:

"The export of capital remedy for overproduction is no remedy at all, but a stimulant certain to be followed by relapse and discouragement."

More interesting still, however, are the sentences underlined on page 152:

"In the formulation and execution of new policy, the immediate task of the statesman is threefold. He must bring his practical sense to bear in creating his idealized conception of things to be achieved in the quest for security and stability. Having clarified his purpose and formulated it in a workable program, he must, after a fashion of the Fathers of 1783-1787, submit his proposal to the nation for discussion, deliberation, and adoption. With the requisite support and legislation obtained, he then proceeds to execution. This is in the American tradition and indeed is the only possible tradition which is compatible with the effective operation of a delicate technological society."

And beneath this is written in the President's bold handwriting:

"American Tradition

1. Formulate the concept.
2. Debate it and get it adopted.
3. Carry it out."

THE OPEN DOOR AT HOME

by CHARLES A. BEARD

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