

## Train of Thought

**"Cadenza," by Ralph Cusack** (Houghton Mifflin. 223 pp. \$3.50), follows the picaresque path of a rakish young man through the haunts of Ireland and France. J. P. Donleavy wrote his own novel, *"The Ginger Man,"* while living in Dublin.

By J. P. Donleavy

I HAD great difficulty starting to read this book. After a few pages you ask, "Where am I?" And, again, after a few more, "Where am I?" And since no one knows where they are I read on. For a long time, however, we are on a railroad siding in the north of Dublin. With Desmond, I would say, the desperate. And undesperate. Now you're wondering, "What is this?" And I confess to knowing, but almost not knowing. Except that Desmond has come a youngster into the world of big cheats, of doctors who will take a swipe of the knife anywhere upon your person, of the hulking farm giants who put guilty hands to private parts, and of others, who are station attendants, priests, and publicans in France.

One can only say that Ralph Cusack has a giant mind. And has seen enough horror in his time to write several bibles. Of which *"Cadenza"* may be Book I. Anyway it's the first time I've ever had to put a book down out of fear of going on to find out what's going to happen. Desmond is on the operating table and the surgeon is casually preparing to cut out the wrong lung. Desmond, of course, protested. However, I won't tell you which one they took out.

To those of you who have never sat in a Dublin railway carriage I say you are missing one of the most exciting experiences in the world. Like Desmond drinking wine out of coffins in France. For those who do not understand—in Ireland, by closing the eyes, you are in France and by keeping them closed too long you may open them in Spitzbergen. So Desmond is in the railway carriage, bumping on the rails in the stamping ground north by northeast from Dublin, an area rarely written about before and maybe never again. He has a heart-rending taste for birds, flowers, all sorts of leaves, trees, and music. He is at first an eager horse shooter in the fields, and later, at the race course, a reluctant one, so as to give some greedy betters a chance at big wins.

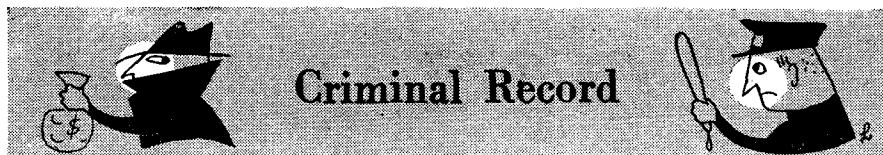
Then there is Melchi, the Captain, whom he goes to visit on his death-

bed—and is late. And while navigating the coffin across waters in an open boat there is a sudden bedlam and—whoops—the Captain in his coffin goes to the bottom. Then Desmond ends up in a most curious whorehouse with fine-fleshed girls.

Another thing that happened was an afternoon with a priest when they were wine-tasting from the various coffins. That particular afternoon was full of musical sounds, and, although it was happening somewhere in France, it was more like an afternoon and night in Dublin, which, if one is not careful, can become, all at once, one's entire youth and middle age. I think, too, Desmond had had a visit to the dentist, which in Ireland is frightening enough, but upon leaving was distantly accosted by a poet of some standing, which is even more frightening. If I know my poets.

ALL round, I think this book is best read while actually in a railway compartment. Perhaps not on the naughty, naughty train that goes from Dublin to Belfast for the natives to bring back heathenish things, but on a train going south to Cork. Certainly the book is mad, just as it's sane. But more like hanging over halfway between life and death, while, however, pouring the peaty preservative distillate down the throat.

One could say this was a great book, a sad book, a bad book—all of which mean nothing. What does mean something is that it's certainly Cusack's book. And the question is not "can the man write?" but "can you read?"



### THE MAN WHO WROTE DETECTIVE STORIES.

By J. I. M. Stewart. Norton. \$3.50. You've enjoyed Michael Innes's mystery tales—well, here is Michael Innes in *propria persona* with a quartet of shorts not exactly in the mystery field, though the title yarn (which is exactly half the book) involves two detective-story writers and their connection with an English murder case. Donnish and adroit.

**SEE NO EVIL.** By Finlay McDermid. Simon & Schuster. \$2.95. Joe Jordan and lady friend, peering out of love-nest window, see California cop shot down by buddies; woman pays, too. Perpendicular pronoun persists.

**ORDEAL BY INNOCENCE.** By Agatha Christie. Dodd, Mead. \$2.95. Kinfolk aghast when guiltlessness of convicted

## Yanks in Yangtzeland

**"The Typhoon's Eye," by Preston Schoyer** (John Day. 320 pp. \$4.50), tells of an American do-gooder who becomes involved in the intrigue of modern Hong Kong. SR's reviewer Robert Payne is himself an old "China hand" and the author of many books, among them, *"House in Peking."*

By Robert Payne

ANYONE who writes a novel with a Chinese setting knows he is up against formidable difficulties. In the first place, there is the improbable landscape, unlike any other. Then there are the Chinese, contemplative, headstrong, wildly dramatic, impervious to the normal thought processes of the West, whose lives have formlessness different from ours. The odds against any Westerner describing any group of Chinese with reasonable accuracy are long.

In his new novel Preston Schoyer has very nearly accomplished the impossible. With sympathy and detachment, he has described the impact of a handful of Americans on some assorted Chinese living in Hong Kong. His Americans run the gamut from the severely intellectual Tony Reston—an old China hand, desperately in love with China and therefore already half-Chinese in his approach to the problems of existence—to the silly Caroline Weitzel, who arrives on a

English youth who died in jail is clearly proved (it means one of survivors must have been killer). Has all the familiar A. C. dexterity, but dialogue is too plentiful.

**AS BAD AS I AM.** By William Ard. Rinehart. \$2.95. Manhattan parolee in jam when brother-in-law (crooked cop) is knocked off; show girls, big-wheel lawyer, convincing cops—everybody gets into the act. Something doing every minute.

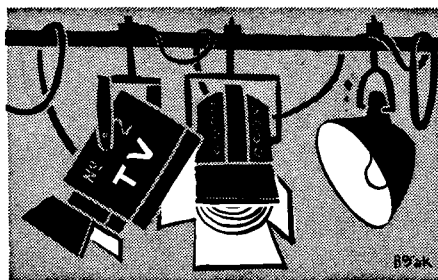
**MY BROTHER'S KILLER.** By Jeremy York. Scribners. \$2.95. Hired London slayer gets wrong man; Chief Superintendent Godwin of Yard looks into problem, but victim's next of kin (and intended corpse) does some good sleuthing on own account. Holds interest nicely. —SERGEANT CUFF.

private goodwill mission with \$5,000 contributed by the Lake Park Society of Ohio as a gesture "to those many millions of Asians whose old and gracious way of life is threatened by extinction."

Poor Caroline does the best she can. The Communist press smells a rat; Reston is uncomfortable; Mr. Yip, the opium-soaked artist with the dying wife, sees the opportunity of a lifetime; clinics and welfare agencies stampede over the spoils; and soon everyone is helping Caroline to disperse her pathetic contribution to the welfare of Asia. Even when Reston decides that the simplest solution is to take Caroline and her motley group of advisers out on his sloop for a week-end cruise around the islands, she holds her head high. She is, after all, the representative of the humanist tradition of the West, and nothing—not even typhoons and the very real danger of falling into the hands of Chinese Communists—will deflect her from her purpose.

The cruise is something of a trick, for it enables the author to let everyone talk his head off in an atmosphere of vicarious excitement (who will receive the money?) and growing danger. But it is a good trick, and especially successful when it allows us to contemplate the figure of Vicky Lowe, who is Reston's secretary, a young woman with the calm beauty of the northern Chinese. She has a husband in Communist China and she is being plagued by the mysterious extortionist Mr. Huang, who comes straight out of Sax Rohmer; but since the present is catching up with Sax Rohmer it hardly matters. Vicky is amazingly alive, captivating, and delightful, and the author has evidently poured over her all his affection and understanding of the Chinese.

The ending is not perhaps the best,



but it will do. Meanwhile there is excellent talk, a good deal of excitement, and a vivid picture of present-day Hong Kong, as it balances precariously on the edge of China.

**HEAVENLY HAVEN:** In "The Fugitives" (Little, Brown, \$3.75), Robert Gutwillig has proved himself to be a writer with an outstanding gift for catching the character, the mood, and the idiom of his contemporaries (young people in their teens and twenties) without being angry, sentimental, or "beat." He also has a delightful inventiveness for offbeat characters and situations and the rather rare gift of being able to say what he wants to in language that is lucid and literate.

"The Fugitives" is about the malaise of the young, their own lack of focus, and sense of personal inadequacy. Most of the action takes place in the Haven, an unconventional sanitarium where no one ever got cured, but whose inhabitants lived in rare peace and harmony. The central character is Stevie Freeman, who has interrupted college to come to the Haven, the only place where he feels he is needed, since there he is allowed to look after others worse off than himself. While at the Haven Stevie has a love affair with a therapist, who has watched her family killed by the Nazis and her marriage destroyed by its momentum.

Stevie is not mad: he is confused, and unable to cope with his mother, his brother, and the rest of the world—with the confusion of Salinger's characters. Like everybody else, he is a fugitive from himself, his responsibilities, and the world. Both he and his family, especially his brother, are extremely likable and affecting people; they try their best, but just can't make connections.

The book is at once entertaining and serious. Mr. Gutwillig has a talent for portraying the young and their relations to each other, as well as an ear for their speech. This is fresh and original writing.

—NIKA STANDEN HAZELTON.

**P.S. FROM P.G.:** P. G. Wodehouse is usually dismissed by serious critics with glib remarks about his "utter lack of significance." His new book, "A Few Quick Ones" (Simon & Schuster, \$3.50)—a collection of short stories written over the last twelve years—suggests the need for a re-evaluation of this great writer.

Is Wodehouse really so insignificant? Does he really have nothing to say about the world we live in? The story "Big Business," for instance, contains a picture of smooth financial cupidity which is far more penetrating than anything in the recent spate of highly touted "business" novels. "The Fat of the Land" treats one of the basic themes of modern literature—money and its effect on character. "Freddy, Oofy, and the Beef Trust" is as apt a comment on the worship of violence in our age as any of Hemingway's prizefighting stories. The truth is, Wodehouse is looking at the same world as his "serious" contemporaries, and he has plenty of perceptive things to say about it.

What alienates the serious critics is not really the "insignificance" of Wodehouse's themes, but his deliberately offhand attitude towards them. He continually seems to say, "Yes, this is a hard world, but why overdramatize it; why not appreciate the absurdity of it?" His is not the gaiety of Pollyanna, but of a man who knows all about human nastiness and has worked out his own way of dealing with it.

So much for Wodehouse's "philosophy." Once aware of it, we can ignore it and enjoy the really significant thing about him, his mysterious gift of spontaneity and individuality. What he creates is strictly his own, thoroughly and unself-consciously imbued with his own personality. He gives us not a comment on life, as lesser writers do, but a kind of life itself, as unique and irreplaceable as a sunset or a Mozart melody.

—JAMES YAFFE.



## Your Literary I. Q.

Conducted by John T. Winterich

FROM WRONG TO RIGHT

To misquote a poem's title is as bad as to misquote the poem itself. Elizabeth Mills of Springfield, Missouri, submits incorrect titles frequently assigned to ten familiar poems and asks you to supply the correct titles and the names of the authors. Justice is meted out on page 58.

1. "To Lucasta, On Going to the Wars"
2. "To the Virgins, To Make the Most of Time"
3. "On Arriving at the Age of Twenty-three"
4. "On First Reading Chapman's Homer"
5. "The Love Story of J. Alfred Prufrock"
6. "A Passionate Shepherd to His Love"
7. "To My Coy Mistress"
8. "Elegy in a Country Churchyard"
9. "The Heathen Chinese"
10. "Death of a Hired Man"