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will still shine, the polished table top still glimmer and family feeling continue to dominate the narrative. So it is in the work of Miss Margaret Barnes. On the first page, "Mr. Horace Sewall . . . pushed back his carved armchair, placed his damask napkin on the row of forks beside his Royal Crown Derby plate, picked up his champagne glass and rose to his feet"; while "the eyes of Sally, his sixteen-year-old daughter, met those of her grandmother across the candlelit table with a little gleam of half-humorous, half-deprecatory sympathy."

That gleam, how filial—but how significant! Sally Sewall is the nicest sort of heroine; the gleam that had kindled in her eye when papa rose to his feet to drink grandmamma's health, and which grandmamma—the old rebel!—affectionately answered, never narrowed to a wink or a sardonic leer. There is nothing subversive about this book. That the world is changing, that bankers who rode the boom have now experienced the slump, and that the family dinner-tables of Chicago millionaires, solid, cultured and aristocratic in their own way, are less elegantly appointed than of yore, is brought home to us in the latter part of the story. The family bank is closed down and the family humbled; but Sally herself remains the virginal, faintly humorous, somewhat conservative young creature—essentially a personage of patrician descent—to whom we were introduced when the story opened. After a time, this air of breeding becomes rather tedious. I find it difficult to believe in fictitious characters whose recognition that they belong to a particular clan is as deep-rooted as the sense of their personal existence; and—perhaps because I have never encountered such a family—their pious obsession is apt to strike me as literary humbug.

Yet Miss Barnes has written an honest and lively book. Here, with special reference to Sally, her two little boys and Alan MacLeod, her husband, whom she married when very young in a fit of war-time enthusiasm, is a picture of American society from 1914 to the inauguration of President Roosevelt. Some of its most interesting chapters are devoted to an analysis of the state of mind—restless, nervous, at moments almost hysterical, though in the midst of plenty—that prevailed in prosperous American circles before the edifice of prosperity had begun to crack. Its effects were both social and individual; Granny shook her head over banking methods of which Grandfather, who swore by railroad-stock and farm-mortgages, would never have approved; while Sally, estranged by her husband's egoism, his automaton-like acceptance of financial slavery—his heart was in the office or on the stock-market, and his scanty leisure given up to meaningless gaddings—heaved the restrained but audible sighs of an embittered wife.

The pair drifted apart, but were re-united. From the point of view of the cynical reader, Alan and Sally MacLeod would seem to have made a matrimonial mountain—which it takes them and their creator several hundred pages to get round—out of an inoffensive amatory molehill. After sympathising at some length with Sally's jealous misery, with the pangs that wracked Alan's divided spirit, it is a trifle exasperating to discover that Alan's infidelity had never been more than theoretical and that some element was lacking from his composition "that has to be in the men who—who go in for that sort of experience." Alan was a monogamist *malgré lui*; but neither Sally nor her husband are as convincing as the background against which they move, and it is on this background—now and then a little overcrowded with the accessories so dear to every female novelist, cut flowers, chintz, pale yellow tea gowns, gate-legged tables and polished copper pots—that Miss Barnes has expended considerable skill.

Whereas Miss Barnes writes of a society that she would appear to know from long and intimate acquaintance, Mr. Nikolai Gubsky, in *Its Silly Face*, writes of surroundings that he has only come to know during recent years. For Mr. Gubsky is a Russian, who has acquired English. His previous novel, *Foreign Bodies*, the story of the Kurtcheninov family and of their attempts, comic and heroic, to adapt themselves to the rigours of English life, was an uncommonly amusing and readable book. His new book, however, is disappointing; the hero, an Anglo-Russian intellectual married to a Russian wife, undertakes, among other somewhat lengthily described activities, a study of the comparative merits of the English and the Russian novel, in which he asserts that, while "English writing is static," Russian fiction is "dynamic . . ." Well, by this standard, *Its Silly Face* is typically British; the narrative flags; it includes many fragments of acute observation and the rather shadowy forms of several interesting and persuasive characters; yet, on the whole, it is an unexciting piece of work. Events occur, but the style never changes tempo; it conveys no feeling of emotional development. Subsidiary characters are lightly, sometimes crudely, sketched in, and the comic verve that enlivened *Foreign Bodies* is entirely absent from this gloomy and monotonous chronicle.

In the last episode Gorya commits suicide. Disgusted by the silly face of bourgeois society, disappointed in his efforts to obtain a post under the Soviet Government, he blew his brains out and abandoned his wife to the friend who loved her. As a social being, he had tumbled between two stools; the established order, represented by English middle-class society—at its grimmest in a northern seaport town—he could not find it in his soul to admire or acknowledge, while Communism had shocked his civilised susceptibilities . . . Gorya's predicament bears a certain resemblance to that of van Bredepoel, the hero of *In a Province*, a moving and cleverly constructed study of racial conflict by Mr. Laurens van der Post. Johan van Bredepoel was a Dutch South African; brought up by his uncle and aunt to despise all "Kaffirs," he developed, nevertheless, a deep and admiring sympathy for Kenon, the young negro, who had left his father's hut to work among white men, in a modern industrial town. The story traces Kenon's downfall, which coincides with—and is, to some extent, the cause of—van Bredepoel's emancipation from racial prejudice. Yet van Bredepoel, too, stops short at Communism; resenting the arrogance of the white races, he is appalled by the prospect of bloodshed and hatred that, "out of their love of the oppressed," the champions of the coloured peoples seem to be fostering, and dies with his moral dilemma still unresolved. His tragedy—shared by many intellectuals—is an abhorrence both of the disease and of the specific.

The three foregoing novels are essays in conflict—between tradition and change; between the individual and a society in which he feels that he has no appointed place; between an intelligent and sensitive young man and the forces of intolerance and hatred that, on both sides, threaten to engulf him. With Miss Dunning, we return to a simpler theme; when *The Spring Begins*, snowdrops (Miss Dunning tells us) push up in a nurse-maid's heart; the head-gardener, like a large horticultural spider, weaves his web for cook's comely assistant; and in the constricted bosom of the nursery governess, at the Vicarage, suppressed desires claim their painful right to live. . . . Of these materials, Miss Dunning has built her story. Three young women find the fruition that they deserve; the guileful gardener snips the firstlings of feminine innocence. It makes a pleasant and curiously vivid little narrative, written in an uncomplicated and easy prose.

PETER QUENNELL

A DELIGHTFUL FRIEND

A Quaker Journal (1804-1861). By WILLIAM LUCAS OF HITCHIN. Vol. I. *Hutchinson.* 18s.

William Lucas was born in 1804; and it was in 1860, the year before his death, that he felt "an inclination to note down a few of the occurrences which dwell in my memory of the half century over which my recollection extends." He was a Quaker by faith and a brewer by profession—by no means so strange a combination as it would seem to-day. He had been educated in Hitchin, first at a Dame's school, then at "Old Dyers in Tiler's Street," Dyer being "a good specimen of the old-fashioned pedagogue"—very like, in fact, a stray character of Dickens. "I should not be doing my duty to your parents," he would say, "if I past such conduct by unpunished; hold out your hand, you infamous brat." Later, he was sent to a school kept by one Joel Lean at Fishponds, near Bristol, and leaving there in 1819, "went at once to a chemist in the Haymarket, London, and after six weeks' trial was duly bound apprentice for five years and a half. The premium paid was £250." For that modest sum he was privileged to live in a little dark, dirty room at the back of the shop with a "succession of swearing, gin-drinking, thieving, canting, ugly old women"; to eat workhouse food, to sleep in the attic in a bed swarming with bugs, to be in the shop from 9 in the morning till 9 at night, and in his turn for a week at a time from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. All this seems to have been curious preparation for becoming a country brewer. At any rate, he concluded his apprenticeship, presumably in 1825, though there is a gap in the journal between 1825 and 1829, the diary beginning again with a series of lively and charming letters from France and the Rhine. Whether this was merely a holiday or a survival of the Grand Tour, or merely a device for studying the methods of German brewers, Lucas does not say. There is another gap in the journal

between 1829 and 1834, when he sets forth, by post and railroad, to tour the Lakes. In 1837 he goes off on "a flying-tour" to North Wales. In 1840 he tours Scotland. Between these excursions he takes his family to Brighton, spends a few days in London, brews his beer in Hitchin, attends the quarterly meetings, takes a day's fishing, goes to a sale or the Royal Academy or to a tulip show. In 1841 he tours Wales again and parts of Yorkshire.

And so it goes on—an interesting and varied life, full of diverse interests, quiet but not dull, provincial but not narrow, cultured but not snobbish. Setting aside the tours to the Rhine and Wales and the Lakes and Scotland, it is an adventure in little things. To Lucas an incident was not insignificant because it was slight. The day is warm, the first swallow has come, the nightingale sings in his garden, the wheat is being carried, the wind is south-west—they were all little things which seemed to him great enough to be recorded. And posterity has confirmed his judgment, for these are the very things which now, a hundred years later, give his journal so much of its freshness and life. His interests are very catholic. Macaulay has an article in *The Quarterly Review*, Dickens is issuing *The Pickwick Papers*, the House of Commons is divided on the Ministerial Church Rate Bill, Wombwell's menagerie arrives, he is enraged by the first assessments for income tax—there is a note or a sentence or a page about them all. The arrival of *The Quarterly Review* is important—but not more important than the coming of the wryneck. Little scraps of family history are put down side by side with his comments on "the revision of import duties." He grows a little excited about the anti-slavery campaign, but not more excited than he grows over the planting of some trees—"Finished planting my new clump at Orton Head Common. The ladies have taken all their share. J. Lister planted all the poplars. Christiana Lucas all the chestnuts, Sarah Lucas the Mountain Ash, and Phoebe Lucas the Abel Poplars."

The book is, in short, a sketch history of his life and times, in every way fresh and delightful. The dry, witty drawings by Samuel Lucas, his better-known brother, are exactly what the book needs. The absence of an index is the one irritating point, but doubtless that omission will be rectified in the second volume.

H. E. BATES

STUDIES FROM THE SOUTH SEAS

Religious and Cosmic Beliefs of Central Polynesia. By R. W. WILLIAMSON. Two vols. *Cambridge University Press.* 50s.

Modern Samoa, Its Government and Changing Life. By FELIX M. KEESING. *George Allen and Unwin, Ltd.* 16s.

The religious beliefs and the cosmogony of the natives of the Polynesian islands are collected for Central Polynesia in Mr. Williamson's two volumes. This cosmogony is in the grand manner. It gives an order of precedence for the beginnings of things. From "nothing" proceeds "smell," from this proceeds "smoke," from "smoke," "clouds," and from clouds, solid land. Rocks and other things mate, and, through a genealogical tree of material matings, gods and men are finally born. As religious belief or philosophy, this order of the emergence of things possibly does as well as any to express in the believer a sense of mystery. Polynesians attach the greatest importance to the genealogical validation of rank and precedence in everyday life. In less practical matters, such as the literary form of their cosmogony, they naturally give to beginnings and mysteries a genealogical form.

Mr. Williamson has written concerning the interpretation of these tales of gods and men. He concludes that the god Maui is a volcano god connected with a belief that the home of the soul after death is in an underworld, while Tane, god of forests, Tangaloa, god of the ocean, and others are connected with a belief that the home of the soul after death is in the sky or over the sea. This connection is not evident, but is a correspondence. There are upper world gods, and a volcano god. There are upper world homes for the dead, and a lower world home. The Polynesians do not believe that the souls of the dead join the gods. Meanwhile, Mr. Williamson suggests that the gods and spirit homes of the upper world really belonged to one people, while the god and spirit home of the lower world really belonged to another people with whom in historical times there was a mixture.

This theory can hardly be accepted as we have not any genuine historical record of such a mixture. The mythology is the shadow of class distinction for the most part. An upper class went as souls of the dead to the upper spirit home, and a commoner class