become an important person to know. From a number of hectic happenings Mr. Gann squeezes the proper amount of dash and drama, though a little less than the proper amount of depth. Only one character rises to any distinction: a Chinese general named Po-Lin who, one hopes, may some day lead Mr. Gann to bigger—and better—novels. —CHARLES LEE.

THREE GENERATIONS OF WOMEN: The heroine of Gladys Hasty Carroll's latest novel, **"One White Star"** (Macmillan, $3.50), is a woman named Laura, whose story is a family story, full of the smells of fresh milk, hay, and wild meat stewing. It is nonetheless a skilful novel, well told in fluent dialogue and realistic detail. For Laura has her troubles. Child of a crude, rough-spoken father and a schoolteacher mother, Laura has married a minister and, as the story begins, she returns to her mother's farm with her own child, Marty. How Laura then is caught in mother-daughter-grandmother relationships is the burden of Mrs. Carroll's tale until, in the final chapters, Marty brings home to supper the man *she* is going to marry and, somehow, through her love for him, is able for the first time to understand her mother. There is another phase to the ending, a surprise one that is almost too much of a surprise, but Mrs. Carroll is an old hand at telling a story and, despite the fact that she offers neither complexity nor obscurity nor symbolism nor profound sociological and psychological meaning, readers who enjoyed her "The Earth Turns" and "Dunnybrook" will probably not be disappointed in this one. —CID RICKETTS SUMNER.

APPRENTICE IN BOHEMIA: "Peter Domanig in America: Brass" (Bobbs-Merrill, $3.95) is the second in Victor White's trilogy of novels (the first was "Steel") about the career in American industry of Peter Domanig, an immigrant boy from Austria who knows where he wants to go, if not precisely why.

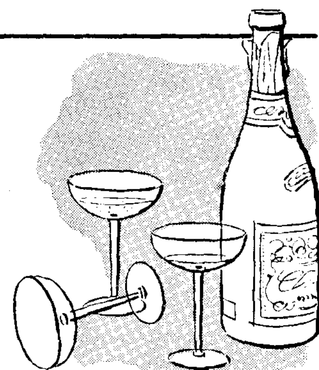
The time of "Brass" is 1925 and Peter, now a partner in a thriving radio manufactory, discovers debutante Sibby, the girl of his youthful dreams, in nearby Greenwich Village, toying cozily with the more romantic aspects of *la vie Bohème*. She quickly accepts him as her worshipful suitor and under her tutelage he serves his apprenticeship in the play-world of speakeasies and Connecticut house parties as conscientiously as he had that of the work-world of the Pittsburgh steel mills in the previous volume. Both Peter and Mr. White seem less at home in this frivolous milieu, and the documentation of its minutiae is less authoritative than in "Steel." On the other hand, the relationship between Peter and Sibby, beset with all the exacerbated symptoms of first love, is more poignantly compelling than anything in the earlier novel. Peter, however, is unready to commit himself to anything more substantial than an ideal, and as the book ends, he renounces Sibby and sails to Europe to confront his unknown past.

Mr. White's prose style is quite unlike anything I am familiar with in contemporary fiction. Peculiarly dated, filled with the mannered flourishes of a more leisurely era than we imagine our own to be, it expresses a kind of earnest and humorless naivete which is alternately irritating and charming. Also, it is so conscientious in its effort to render with meticulous exactitude the quality of each scene that it often smothers itself in qualifications. But what begins to be apparent is that the characteristics of the style are also the characteristics of the trilogy's hero, and perhaps more suitable for the telling of his story than we had at first thought. And Peter begins to emerge, in "Brass," as someone more complex and interesting than the dogged Boy Scout who plowed his way through "Steel." —JEROME STONE.

CRIME OF PASSION: Recipient of France's Prix Femina, **"The Woman with No Past,"** by Serge Groussard (Dutton, $3), is a novel involving a *crime passionel*, a subject which the French always manage to treat with more verve and sympathetic insight than we Anglo-Saxons.

The story opens with Mada, the woman in the case, fleeing the provincial town where she has just murdered her wealthy husband, who had discovered her with a casual lover. She meets Malard, a strong, silent barge captain who, sensing her distress, offers to take her to Paris via a leisurely canal route, and who asks no questions. His mate, a toadlike, despicable chap, asks no questions, either, but he gets answers, and soon pieces together the reason for Mada's flight. The rest of the book builds up the suspense of what he will do with his information, and develops the love affair between Mada and Malard, colored with the irony that only after it is too late to begin again has the in-

REUNION



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RAND McNALLY

constant lady met a man who could command her deep and selfless devotion.

Unfortunately for American readers, the dialogue has been translated by Daphne Woodward into an idiom so exclusively British that its incongruity with the extreme Frenchness of the characters and setting is disturbing. But it is a well-planned narrative with a scenario-like quality, and with a number of small, earthy touches that remind one of those moving, elemental films that Marcel Pagnol directs with such seemingly artless perception. —J. S.

STORIES IN THE WINE LEAVES: J. M. Scott's little novel **"The Man Who Made Wine"** (Dutton, $2) is not so much about the man who made wine as about wine itself. Michel Rachelet, who is retiring as manager of a Bordeaux vineyard, is moved to reflect on the past as he looks at all the different vintages lined up before him on a banquet table. A bottle marked 1919, for example, recalls the July night he discovered that moths were breeding on the vines. The only way to save the grapes that year was to handpick and burn every infected leaf.

This unusual cinematic device of seeing time through wine bottles becomes a bit obvious even in a book only 125 pages long, nor has the author's imagination endowed Rachelet with any qualities not usually found in successful managers of any business. What remains, then, is a convincing picture of a vineyard and all that goes into making good wine. Mr. Scott's affection for his subject has its touching moments. Avoiding the danger of sentimentality, he shows that wine is made up of living organisms and hence has its own life that commands respect if not reverence from the connoisseur. The slow fading out of a great wine like that of 1900 corresponds to Rachelet's own decline.
—ROBERT MINTON.

Writers and Writing

Continued from page 19

that the Marxist doctrine of class warfare is "absurd," or that Samuel Butler was "a horrible little worm," when one just sees it in print, is, somehow, inadequate. And to be informed in parentheses in the middle of an essay on George Orwell that "the 1930s were a time of keen Communist penetration and conversion" is irritating.

Sometimes the friendly guide lapses into the grade-school teacher and the charm chills to a briskness perilously near to fatuity. "Doesn't it seem ridiculous," he asks in "Perspectives of Science" that "we should live seventy or eighty years in the world without understanding how it is constructed, how our neighbors the animals live, and how our bodies work?" And before we can mumble a sheepish agreement he answers briskly for us: "Of course it is." The reader is grateful that he did not add, "boys and girls."

There is also an uncomfortable feeling, which the intonations of the voice would, no doubt, have dispelled, that the clerk of Oxenford is trying a little too hard to identify himself with the laity. It is true that Longfellow and Kipling at times wrote good poetry, and it is true that Auden, Spender, MacLeish, and Pound have at times written bad poetry, but these facts will have to be stated differently to different audiences. His assertion that he has tried unsuccessfully fifteen times to read "Finnegans Wake" may establish a bond with his radio audience but it may alienate him from at least a segment of his reading audience. He is at liberty to laugh at the figure of Atlas in Rockefeller Center. Thousands do. But one of the chief reasons that he gives for his contempt of the statue—that for all its attitude of strain and tension it is, really, supporting an empty sphere; you can see right through the thing—leaves one aghast.

It is the faults, however, that seem forced. The gay sautrye is simply not his instrument. The virtues — the learning, the gusto, the humanity, the love of literature—are in character. Mr. Highet is a very superior person and will have to make the best of it.

Notes

PROUST AS A MORALIST: Although Elliott Coleman in his essays on Proust, **"The Golden Angel"** (Coley Taylor, New York, $3.50), is arguing for the novelist as a moral writer—in opposition to a popular thesis which celebrates Proust's "decadence"—he by

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