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BOOKS AND PEOPLE

**LABELS AND LIBELS
and a Terrible Tale**

The Grand Tour, it would seem, still has its attractions for our Bright Young Men, though these days they prefer—and I don't blame them—to travel without those wise and (superficially) respectable mentors upon whom their great-grandfathers would have insisted. Commendably, too, they do not take too much for granted. They "see things for themselves," which can sometimes be a most exciting pursuit. And when they come home to write their books—the death-duties and similar financial delights more or less drive them into print—they may reasonably hope for material as well as spiritual rewards.

The latest grand tourist to return to safety (and with book all complete) is Mr. Evelyn Waugh, whose *Labels* (Duckworth 8s. 6d.) is very good fun. I am not surprised to find the Book Society putting it on their recommended list. In places it is lively, but in places it is rather severe, and that is just as it should be. Mr. Waugh saw much that was terribly bogus (or, should I say, humbug-making?) and much that was genuinely queer. He began well by informing the gossip-writers that he was going to Russia on board the good ship *Stella Polaris*, which was "doing" the Mediterranean, he decided that Russia might well be left to get on without him. Instead, he went to Monte Carlo and Naples, to Port Said and Malta, to Constantinople (which you must call Stamboul these days) and Athens. And, returning, he took a peep at Venice, whose traffic problems are less serious than ours, looked in at Barcelona, where the architecture is a trifle "gaudy"—you must read the book to understand my joke—and came home by Gibraltar and Lisbon.

I admit that I was expecting a rather more impertinent book, for I have heard Evelyn Waugh described as the second most impertinent young man in London. (The name of the first will be sent under cover, on application, if the necessary

stamps are enclosed.) But if the book be not impertinent, it is piquant and entertaining, and, of course, pleasantly outspoken. The Sphinx somewhat naturally failed to impress this new crusader. As a piece of sculpture he found it "hopelessly inadequate to its fame," and "just about as inscrutable and enigmatic as Mr. Aleister Crowley," who may or may not be pleased with the comparison.