

Secured for Sea

LAST ESSAYS. By JOSEPH CONRAD. New York: Doubleday, Page & Co. 1926. \$2.

Reviewed by CAPT. FELIX RIESENBERG
Author of "Vignettes of the Sea"

WHEN an offshore ship finally breaks mooring and the anchor is aweigh, certain things must be done. The cable is hove in, the anchor is sighted, the cat is hooked and the anchor is lifted to the cat head; the ring stopper is passed, the fish is hooked and the great flukes are hove in over the bill board and stoppered with a shank painter. Then we secure every thing for sea. A long voyage is ahead and the ship must be seaworthy if she is to fetch her final destination, whatever that may be.

In these last essays, Conrad's publishers have hove in the last few fathoms of his writings, and the list of his work is secure and in order for the long voyage he is now making. To praise Joseph Conrad is no longer news, in fact the suspicion creeps in that timid people may be ready to reflect the glamor of his praise while fearing to investigate conditions for themselves. They may even go to see "Lord Jim" in the movies, "to get a line on him."

"Last Essays" are advised as "first reading" for Conrad. He takes you along, by easy watches, to ships, and among men, and about the world he visualized as a boy scanning the pages of a geography published in 1852, when "The heart of its Africa was white and big." He studied maps of the dark land and dreamed of lakes he later on was to see. This faculty of search into the shadows leads him to the remark, "As a bit of prophetic practice it was not bad for me."

This book abounds in a wealth of interesting information about Conrad, largely because he had no intention whatever of engaging in explanations. As the papers are often casual, called forth by differing occasions, he seems to have set down answers to his own questioning.

Conrad is now subject to a sort of perpetual Board of Inquiry. What its findings will be remains to be seen, but books will be written about him, books he would probably be unable to understand.

He was a sailor, a fervent advocate of sail. In the essay with the fine title "Memorandum—On the Scheme for Fitting Out a Sailing Ship for the Purpose of Perfecting the Training of Merchant Service Officers Belonging to the Port of Liverpool" he has set down the ideal specifications for a training ship. Britain has abandoned her deep sea sailing training. Her answer to this plea is such craft as the *Makala*, a schoolsteamer. Once I met a young man serving as a cadet on this schoolsteamer, a bilious young man who smoked fags.

In this last book is set down his love for Stephen Crane, his prejudices, his enthusiasms, and his scrap of Congo diary.

It is my unreliable opinion that "Last Essays" is one of Joseph Conrad's most interesting books.

Exponents of an Idea

MAN ALONE. By GEORGE AGNEW CHAMBERLAIN. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1926. \$2.

Reviewed by LOUIS KRONENBERGER

MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S novel is large in its proportions and its theme, and striking in some of its scenes and projection of character; but it is fiction, not life. One feels one is reading a story, possessed to be sure of its striking and memorable moments, but nevertheless apart from the world where one lives. Its contacts are artificial, literary. Its force is the force of an idea, not of a vital and touching reality. As you read, you are frequently conscious of its proportions, you are frequently absorbed by the "bigness" of its scenes. But when you have finished, you know it is as hollow as it is big.

The last portion of the book definitely indicates the hollowness. For a long time it gathers strength, setting before you in Thomas Strayton and his son, Torque, though never two human beings, at least two powerful exponents of an idea. Thomas, deserted by his wife when Torque is three, becomes dominated by a rabid belief in the rottenness and badness of all women. In that belief he brings Torque up, and his influence upon his son is great.

The book rolls on, acquiring an impact which may ultimately give meaning and conviction to the crisis toward which Torque moves. But when in the next generation the crisis comes, the strength of "Man Alone" has spent itself. The man has not come to life and he meets the situation of his motherless daughter in a fashion not natural, but hopelessly contrived—in a fashion which serves no better end than to prolong the story, and then finish it conventionally.

Torque's ultimate capitulation in the romance between Janie and Ralph Damon is a glaring weakness on the part of Mr. Chamberlain; but as a matter of fact "Man Alone" has taken its slump a hundred pages earlier. The slump comes when he takes the stand which finally necessitates his capitulation; all that is convincing in his attitude toward women ceases with the insane attitude he adopts toward his daughter. Every semblance of life is crushed out of the story by the wild falsification of character and human motives that takes hold of him. Mr. Chamberlain cannot satisfy us afterwards by inferring that he acts from an inhibited love of Janie. Mr. Chamberlain has used all his strength to mold his man, to achieve a lucid and memorable incarnation of an idea; when finally the idea clashes with life, it is sterile. Or so it is made to be. The bigness is attained; the unnatural development of character and action from that point on, shows the hollowness behind it.

One cannot neglect the story's omnipresent background. It pictures sixty years in the craft of glass-blowing. Father and son, from picturesque days when they stand naked breathing on glass to an era of modern methods, are part of the extensive picture, building up a mighty business. Torque's passion is to find a formula for unbreakable glass. It is Ralph Damon who stumbles ultimately upon it, when a living man is accidentally melted with the seething mass in a furnace. This represents one of the numerous striking but unsound moments of the book. The discovery itself you can take for what it is, or as the symbol of the woman Torque is deluded into believing cannot exist. By that time it does not matter much. It is simply a strong moment in a book, far removed from a world where men live and breathe.

Honest But Slap-Dash

SOLDIERS' PAY. By WILLIAM FAULKNER. New York: Boni and Liveright. 1926. \$2.

Reviewed by THOMAS BOYD

WILLIAM FAULKNER'S novel, "Soldiers' Pay," is not for people of prosaic minds. From the outset this story of strange humans in the spring of 1919, following the signing of the armistice, is pitched unnaturally high; and as the tale continues it seems as if the author were struggling to break all contacts with the normal world and to vault upward into a sort of esoteric sphere of his own making.

Shorn to its baldest "Soldiers' Pay" tells of a young American aviator, given up for dead by his father, who returns to his north Georgia home badly mutilated and discovers that the girl to whom he is engaged has given herself to a youth who remained in the village during the war. This young aviator is described as having a face so scarred that even gin-drinking flappers faint when forced to gaze upon it. Discharged from an English hospital as incurable, he is on his way back to die on his native heath.

The story begins with three drunken soldiers riding westward in a parlor car after demobilization. One of the former doughboys nonchalantly tries to push another through the window. There is such talk as this: "You wrong me as ever man wronged. Accuse me of hiding mortgage on house? Take this soul and body; take all. Ravish me, big boy." The answer to that is given: "Hark, the sound of battle and the laughing horses draw near. But shall they dull this poor unworthy head? No! But I would like to of seen one of them laughing horses. Must of been lady horses all together. Your extreme highness . . . will you be kind enough to kindly condescend to honor these kind but unworthy strangers in a foreign land?"

At best such *non sequiturs* are amusing, suspiciously reminiscent of the mad dream of Leopold Bloom. They pave the way out of reality and place the action of the story on a shadowy horizon where vivid characterization is unnecessary and background not pertinent.

Thus "Soldiers' Pay" offers the reader a group of vague, abnormally behaving characters who waver uncertainly and fantastically through the story. Donald Mahon, the wounded hero, is described only by his scar. Mrs. Powers, the war widow, comes into the reader's consciousness as "the black woman." Januarius Jones seems like an offshoot of the personality of "stately plump Buck Mulligan" of "Ulysses."

These characters act with an almost delightful lack of responsibility. Meeting Donald Mahon on a train in New York State Mrs. Powers and Joe Gilligan, who evidently have other destinations, decide to accompany the wounded youth to his father's home in Georgia, a jaunt of only about a thousand miles. Staying over one night in a hotel the three live in a strange proximity. This sort of incident is capped only by the behavior of Januarius Jones. Jones, a fat satyr, appears from nowhere on the lawn of Donald Mahon's preacher father. He likes the place, and stays, hurling obscene words at Mahon's fiancée, whom he endeavors to seduce. But in this Jones fails, the girl preferring the village boy with an automobile.

Mr. Faulkner submits to very little government in writing. His impressionistic manner is honest but slap-dash; often he sets down an extraordinarily vivid scene. The book has fervor and strength, but it would be more effective if it were better controlled. So far as the returned soldier is concerned Larry Barreto made a much better job of him in "A Conqueror Passes."

Youth's Merry-Go-Round

ROUNDABOUT. By NANCY HOYT. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1926. \$2.50.

Reviewed by ANNE PARRISH
Author of "The Perennial Bachelor," etc.

"ROUNDABOUT" is a first novel written with the help of those engaging gifts, a seeing eye and a light touch, escaping on the one side the curse of earnestness, and on the other that of "wise-cracking." Much of it has the brightly-colored, amused and amusing naïve naughtiness of a Parisian Sunday far away from the haunts of "iggleef," the Ritz, the Place Vendôme. A quotation from itself, "youth and glamour and tinsel gaiety," could be taken as its own description, but not as a complete description, for it has passages of warm living emotion, and of cool clear-sighted honesty. And not only can Nancy Hoyt see things herself, but she can make her reader see them, from "the soap, a slimy fragment with a dark hair clinging to it," to "pink camellias—surrounded by a frill of cream-colored lace."

She writes of "Society" with a refreshing absence of either reverence or rage. Young men called Pinky or Pom-Pom, whose real names are James Angus Ronald Macnaughton Ferguson-Creighton, Lord Invercauld and Baron of Clyde, or Jacob Ulrich Arnold Nicol Vander Poesen Amerongen Le Monier Deemskirk, Count Arnem, drift through the pages, diplomats kiss hands, and flunkies open doors, as the scenes shift from Paris to Washington, from Washington to New York, but they are taken calmly.

In the midst of a tinsel bouquet the heroine, Denise, is a living flower, a warm, enchanting, ridiculous girl, irresistibly introduced on one of those plunging pink pigs of a Paris merry-go-round, showing too much leg clad in stockings cotton from the knee up. But here, instead of "Lady into Fox," we have Lady into Zoo. She has a bunny upper lip, hair like a chipmunk, and is called by her father white rabbit, rat, mouse, louse, lamb, wretched insect, and wood-tick. The father himself is a police-dog, an angel-lamb, and a great

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growly bear; various young men are Sealyhams, worms, and dirty dogs, and an aunt is an owl, moulting feathers of speech.

In the telling of the absurd and tragic young love affair of Denise of Paris and the beautiful prig John of Boston—it is a triumph, by the way, how you are made to dislike that young man and yet to understand perfectly why Denise loved him—sentimentalism is avoided like the plague, but it floods the portrait of the father of Denise, one of those fiction fathers whose motherless daughters call them by their first names, or refer to them, with capitals, as the Old Man or the Aged Parent. This one, perhaps it will not surprise experienced readers to learn, is named Ian, is an artist, and has an often-expressed hatred of conventional society.



In the Age of Straight Fronts and Pompadours young ladies used to keep "Memory Books," and "Roundabout" sometimes seem like the Memory Book of a modern Young Lady of Fashion, containing, instead of dance cards and valentines, a sophisticated assortment of swizzle-sticks, Black Narcissus, mascot dolls, *pot de chambres*, Daumier drawings, lipsticks, Tarts (not strawberry) *Cachet Fèvre*, and pretty *poules* who "counted their service stripes in flexible diamond bracelets." Sometimes Nancy Hoyt succumbs to the lure of the list. Charlie, for instance, is described in part as "quite unlike that criterion of elegance, the young gardeec, conceived and produced by the combined efforts of Eton, Sandhurst, Hawes and Curtis, Michael Arlen, The Bachelor's, and 'Buck's,'" but reminds you of a sketch by Roger Boutet de Monvel, "a half-finished *croquis* by Drian, of a cocker spaniel—of a Paul Morand short story, an eighteenth century snuff-box, an eighteen-forty beaver hat and the latest cocktail invented at the Paris Ritz."

But her girls, described in a few "pleasantly malicious" words, are startlingly alive—Pansy Merino with her poise, her *aplomb*, and her long white gloves, Abby Postlethwaite motoring in a white polo coat, with her weather-beaten face and frizzy pale gold hair, Vivienne Hollis with her rouged "dryly coral cheeks," her embroidered white gloves, her talk of "Califernia" and its "eranges." "Roundabout" is young, but never crude. It is fun to read. It must have been fun to write.

Gide on Dostoevsky

DOSTOEVSKY. By ANDRÉ GIDE. Translated from the French. With an introduction by Arnold Bennett. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1926. \$2.50.

Reviewed by ALEXANDER KAUN
University of California

ONE seldom fails to delight in the urbanity and brilliance of the author of "L'Immoraliste," even when one does not agree with his critical judgment. His book on Dostoevsky is based on a series of "causeries" he gave for Jacques Copeau's School of Dramatic Art at the "Vieux Colombier." The English edition contains an introductory note by the author's friend, Arnold Bennett, whose enthusiasm for Gide is coupled by an unexpected admiration for Dostoevsky's genius not only as "a supreme psychologist and narrator, but also as a publicist." Mr. Bennett commends the dictum of Gide that "there never was an author more Russian in the strictest sense of the word and withal so universally European." This quotation, and its tacit commendation, are symptomatic of the growing recognition by western minds of the universality of Dostoevsky's appeal. The western world has been slow and wavering in granting this recognition. In fact, the war fatigue has produced a tendency to disparage the morbid introspection of Dostoevsky on the part of such "healthy" hedonists as H. L. Mencken or such facile gallicists as Clive Bell. It is therefore significant to hear such a representative westerner as Gide assure us that "the rallying of individual energies [to Dostoevsky] is at work now throughout Europe, slowly, mysteriously, almost chiefly in Germany . . . in France, too, where the rising generation recognizes and appreciates, better than that of M. de Vogüé, his strength. The hidden reasons which delayed his success will be the builders of a more enduring fame." It is a pity that the English edition does not contain the suavely sarcastic passages of the original concerning M. de Vogüé's fastidious attitude toward Dostoev-

sky. This omission prevents the reader from an immediate comparison of the judgment of these spokesmen of two successive generations for the realization of "the progress made by western Europe in the appreciation of Russian psychology," in the words of Mr. Arnold Bennett.

For in the indication of this progress lies the chief value of Gide's book. As an analysis of Dostoevsky's work it adds precious little to the Russian and German critiques, or to that best book on the subject in the English language, by Janko Lavrin. To be sure Gide eclipses his predecessors by his intrinsic French clarity and sense of measure and proper emphasis; as a result his portrait of Dostoevsky is the most poignant and unblurred in the voluminous literature on this ungrateful sitter. The most important thing about Gide is that he approaches Dostoevsky as a western European, making no attempt at assuming a Russian mode of thinking and feeling, which has been alleged to be the only successful approach. Gide gauges Dostoevsky and makes us visualize his chaos by employing the comparative method and drawing parallels with western literature. Against a background of contrasts and similarities the personality of Dostoevsky stands out in relief, and becomes accessible to the reader who is wont to use his western yardstick. When Gide tells us that Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Blake, and Browning are "four stars of a single constellation," and proceeds to illustrate his point, we are on familiar ground, even if we find the comparison at times strained, as in the case of Blake's "Marriage of Heaven and Hell." We are accustomed to link Nietzsche with Dostoevsky, of whom the author of "Zarathustra" said: "Dostoevsky is the only psychologist from whom I had anything to learn." Gide dwells on this affinity, but he adds a profound analysis of the contrast between the two thinkers' conception of the superman: "Nietzsche advocates the affirmation of personality . . . Dostoevsky postulates its surrender. Nietzsche presupposes the heights of achievement where Dostoevsky prophesies utter ruin."



The "formlessness" and indistinctness of Dostoevsky's characters are emphasized by Gide as the Russian's main difference from western writers, even from Tolstoy. Speaking of Dickens, Gide explains the "secret of his popularity" by his simple, "childish" in fact, method of classifying his types into just and wicked, as in Fra Angelico's "Last Judgment." Essentially similar is his judgment of Balzac, when he compares his pen to the brush of David, and Dostoevsky's to that of Rembrandt. The difference between the novels of Dostoevsky and those of Lesage, Voltaire, Fielding, Smollett, even of Tolstoy and Stendhal, is to Gide the difference between a picture and a panorama.

In a novel of Stendhal, or of Tolstoy [the English version is here misleading], the light is constant, steady, and well-diffused. Every object is lit in the same way, and is visible equally well from all angles; there are no shadow effects. But in Dostoevsky's books, as in a Rembrandt portrait, the shadows are essential.

Gide proceeds to analyze the Frenchman's worship of logic, form, consistency, his endeavor to reduce life and human experience to neat formulas, his concern with stylization. The formless, or the not yet formed, is eschewed, and this is why Gide finds no adequate child portraiture in French literature. The French, or rather one might say, the western mind, when faced with complexity or chaos, strives to introduce organization, clarity, to bridge gulfs and fill in abysses. "At need we force things a trifle," admits Jacques Rivière, Gide's collaborator in the *Nouvelle Revue Française*. Dostoevsky, on the contrary, revels in chaos, turmoil, and confusion. Complexity is his natural element, and he makes no attempt at simplifying or shaping matters, but rather accentuates inconsequences and inner contradictions. Unlike Dickens' characters, those of Dostoevsky defy classification, for they are simultaneously possessed of God and Satan. André Gide is one of the few western critics to have observed that Dostoevsky's contradictory characters are not merely cases of "bovarysm," of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, but are single personalities with simultaneously co-existing pluralistic selves. In the light of modern psychology Dostoevsky appears a deep realist, a knower of our hidden self, a revealer of the most wonderful adventures, conflicts, and battles of the human mind. Will the western man accept Dostoevsky, or will he continue to prefer the comforting film of just-a-trifle-forced logic and stylization?

Poincaré's Counterstroke

AU SERVICE DE LA FRANCE, NEUF ANNÉES DE SOUVENIRS. By RAYMOND POINCARÉ. Paris: Librairie Plon, Plon-Nourrit et Cie. 1926.

Reviewed by ARCHIBALD CARY COOLIDGE
Harvard University

IN the days when people were more familiar with the Bible than they are now, everyone had heard of the "desire . . . that mine adversary had written a book." Mr. Raymond Poincaré's adversaries, both in and out of France, have written many books, not to speak of countless magazine articles and a still vaster number of newspaper ones. Today Mr. Poincaré is writing a book in his turn. The first two volumes have already appeared. Rumor has it that there will be ten before he is done and that arrangements have been made for an English edition. Mr. Poincaré is not afraid of his adversaries, he is not that kind. If he has kept quiet while a whole school of writers have been describing him as the villain to whom they attribute the chief guilt for the World War, it has not been because he was cowed by the storm. When he was prime minister, he was too busy to indulge in historical polemics. Since his fall, he has evidently been gathering and arranging his material to answer back. Now he is ready and is letting drive.

To judge by his first two volumes, there is nothing apologetic about his attitude. To be sure, there are things he has left unsaid, but he is not evasive. He does not dodge the charges that have been brought against him, on the contrary he repeatedly cites Siebert, the *Livre Noir*, and Stieve, the great storehouses which have furnished so much ammunition to his detractors. He steps on Mr. Judet again and again until one can almost hear the squeaks from under his foot. He devotes a few pages to Victor Marguerite from whom he quotes a number of letters which can hardly be pleasant reading for that gentleman. He is not trying to conciliate his enemies and must be prepared for an outburst of furious replies which we suspect will not trouble him greatly.

Yet vigorous and polemical as the book is, it is not disfigured by unseemly violence, there is no mouthing or ranting. Mr. Poincaré goes straight ahead on his course smiting to the right and to the left when the occasion demands, but maintaining, as he always has maintained, his own dignity. It is true he does not mind repeating compliments he has received, and foreigners at least will not be thrilled by some of the extracts from his speeches which he has reprinted for our benefit, but after all a man who has been so savagely abused may be forgiven if he quotes a few nice things that have been said to him and takes satisfaction in the good ones he has said himself. He is also not ungenerous in his estimate of others. He has warm words of appreciation for his friends, including some who could hardly have been called that at a later date. Although he is frank in his dislike of the Germans, or at least of their rulers, his tone about them is generally moderate. Of the English he speaks as friends with whom he was always anxious to cooperate as closely as possible, and he admires Sir Edward Grey. He likewise praises his Russian allies, but here he makes more reservations; for instance, though in the main he thinks well of Sasonov, he is sharp in his criticisms of Isvolski, whom he neither liked nor trusted.



Mr. Poincaré's memoirs begin with March, 1912, when he came into power after the fall of the Caillaux ministry. Thenceforth his story is that of his policy and aims as prime minister, the difficulties he had to meet and the way he confronted them. His purpose is to prove that the main object of his efforts throughout was to preserve peace. The international situation he had to face was perilous and complicated. During the first half of the year, the war between Italy and Turkey over Tripoli threatened to reopen, as indeed it ultimately did reopen, the whole Eastern Question. Foreign affairs everywhere required the most delicate handling. Mr. Poincaré, by the way, passes rather too lightly over the dispute due to the seizure of French steamers by the Italians and the fact that the stiffness of his attitude on this occasion, though immediately successful in obtaining compliance with his demands, produced deep resentment in Italy and helped to