

Highlights in the Scholarly Journals

By J. DeLANCEY FERGUSON

JOSEPH CONRAD has been discovered by the source-hunters. In *Modern Language Notes* for June Miriam Hatheway Wood writes of "A Source of Conrad's *Suspense*," showing that Conrad incorporated in his unfinished novel an authentic anecdote of Napoleon and a number of other details which he found in the *Memoirs of the Comtesse de Boigne*. In the same journal the present writer reprints a version of the original anecdote on which Conrad built the amusing story of "The Duel." In extenuation both writers may plead that their material really sheds some light on Conrad's methods as an artist.

Many lovers of Samuel Pepys will be shocked to learn that no completely accurate transcription of the Diary has ever been published. We all knew that even Wheatley's edition was expurgated, but we assumed that what was printed was correct. In *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* for April William Matthews declares that Edwin Chappell's transcription in "Shorthand Letters of Samuel Pepys" "is well done, and . . . has the distinction of being the only scholarly Pepysian transcription yet printed." In editing the Diary, Mynors Bright copied Lord Braybrooke's text, making fresh transcripts only of the parts which Braybrooke omitted. Wheatley in turn copied Bright. Now at last, after more than a century of squeamishness and laziness, a complete fresh transcript has been made, and an unexpurgated edition is preparing.

In the same issue, James Routh's "Do Women Writers Use More Words per Idea than Men?" asks a question but fails to answer it conclusively. The article is another of the perennial attempts to apply statistical methods to art. Mr. Routh analyzes the prose of forty-nine authors by counting the fully stressed words, and concludes:

Among living men, fourteen out of twenty-three, or sixty-one per cent, use a strong style. Among living women six out of seventeen, or thirty-five per cent, use a strong style.

Among men of an older generation only a few use a strong style. Therefore men are changing from the old and verbose style of the classics more rapidly than women.

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 67)

THOMAS HARDY—
"GEORGE MEREDITH"

He spoke as one afoot will wind
A morning horn ere men awake;
His note was trenchant, turning
kind. . . .
He was of those whose wit can
shake
And riddle to the very core
The counterfeits that Time will
break.

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by Arnold Zweig



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18 E. 48th St.
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The New Books

Fiction

FOUR ROADS TO DEATH. By Benjamin Appel. Knopf. 1935. \$2.

Mr. Appel has written a brilliant and highly artificial story of an imaginary expedition into the great deserts of Central Asia.

It is a story of greed and self-exploitation from beginning to end, but of a greed that through a curious flaw in Mr. Appel's method has little root in the characters that succumb to it, and whose deeper implications are either lost or fumbled. The desperate, driven creatures who reel and stumble through his pages poisoned by their own primitive appetites have little to do with life and still less, one may suppose, with the desert of Mr. Appel's creation. They are phantoms, one and all, hard-boiled to be sure, but lost forever and forever wandering in the strange, mirage-like quality of these pages.

The opening chapter of this book has a transfiguring liveliness and entertainment. Mr. Appel makes an impressive case for the folly and exhibitionism that underlie a good many highly advertised attempts to sell the wilderness to the home-folks. Here, in its own home setting, within the confines of the city built in the image of a thousand pathological success stories, Mr. Appel might have

picked his way thoughtfully through the trumpery and ineptitudes of the Jensen-Enbright Asiatic expedition to a complete realization of its human background. But he must follow them into the wilderness and lose them there, not so much the victims of their own dehumanized folly as of his own brittle extravagance.

E. L.

THE FARM AT PARANAO. By Laurence Kirk. Doubleday, Doran. 1935. \$2.

Although it is billed as a psychological horror story like the author's previous "Whispering Tongues," this reviewer found Mr. Kirk's new book predominantly a shrewd and amusing light novel of character. The author works hard to build up the suspense; and when Fanny, the Jane Austenesque girl from the small English town, goes out to South America to marry the mysterious Keith Buchanan, one expects an immediate disaster. Some readers may think that the result does justify the suspense. This reader did not; even the later excitement, which comes at the very end, seemed a slight anticlimax after all the preparation.

But the point is that, anyhow, "The Farm at Paranao" is a very readable and entertaining novel. It contains some excellent caricatures of typical English tourists; Fanny, the heroine, is independent

and engaging; and Keith, her fiancé on the Brazilian farm, of whom we know so little for so long, turns out to be an interesting surprise. Altogether it's a highly superior time-killer.

G. S.

HUNGARIAN RHAPSODY. By Sheila Fitzgerald. Harpers. 1935. \$2.

A feud between two families is dramatized in this clever first novel and is particularly enhanced by a Hungarian setting. The story moves rather slowly, at first, through the childhood misadventures of the wilful and beautiful Margit Horvath and the three young Ehrenfelds, but it soon gathers speed and plunges rapidly into Paul Ehrenfeld's tragic infatuation for Margit and his tubercular brother Bela's amorous escapades. This English author seems to have a lively sympathy for the Hungarian temperament. She adroitly skims the surface of the many personalities involved in her scheme of hatred and love, and her characterizations, though superficial, are very graphic.

The book is written with verve and abandon. The gay feasts and sensuous love-making in luxurious surroundings make intoxicating reading. But the Danube-severed beauties of Budapest and the fertile charms of the Ehrenfelds' rich country estate are so enchanting that they actually distract one's attention from the tragic implications of the plot. The book has the quality of light opera—fascinating but immaterial. After a while the rose-tinted, bourgeois atmosphere becomes a trifle cloying and it is surprisingly easy to lay this attractive novel to one side.

D. P.

Miscellaneous

SEXUAL LIFE IN ANCIENT ROME. By Otto Kiefer. Dutton. 1935. \$5.

MEN AND WOMEN. By Magnus Hirschfeld. Putnams. 1935. \$4.

Many, many books have been written on the cause of the fall of the Roman Empire. In "Sexual Life in Ancient Rome," Mr. Kiefer asserts "that true Christian ideals cannot be allied to a mighty power like the Roman Empire, and that they did in fact play their part in undermining that structure from within and eventually causing its disintegration." Taking the sexual life as presenting the best and fullest picture of the "drives" that characterized the ancient Romans, he finds it compounded of sadism and sensuality. Sadism was inherent in the attitudes, ideas, and institutions of Rome, and Mr. Kiefer stresses its role in education, in the leisure activities, and in the insatiable cruelty of the mob. Sensuality, Mr. Kiefer's other component, he finds reflected in their love poetry, their institutions of marriage, concubinage, and prostitution, and in their religious and philosophic speculations. Whether expressed heterosexually or homosexually Mr. Kiefer feels that sensuality is a base product. In their love the Romans rose no higher than the physical act. Neither the mind nor the "soul" was involved. But there was no degeneration. Their sadism and sensuality were a constant and integral part of the Roman ethos to be found in the early days as well as during the Empire. It was

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