

to question them. But the fact remains as plain as day that Conrad took in Ford, or Hueffer, as a collaborator on "Romance" quite voluntarily, that Ford, or Hueffer, provided the main outline of the story, and that the same Ford, or Hueffer, did his fair share of the writing. This last he proves, indeed, by a document over Conrad's sign manual. Conrad, in those days, was by no means the Eminentissimo he later became. His books were not selling, the reviews treated him stupidly, and he was so poor that he had to take a pension from the British Civil List. Ford, meanwhile, was a promising young man, very well connected, and full of plausible theories. Is it against the probabilities that Conrad took him seriously, and listened to him with respect? I don't think it is. Conrad, in fact, needed help. He was feeling his way, trying to formulate a programme, wrestling with the difficulties of a strange tongue. Hueffer, alias Ford, brought into the partnership all the high assurance of youth—more, a dogmatic positiveness of a powerful order. It steadied Conrad, and I believe he knew it.

At all events, Ford ben-Hueffer's account of those early years is surely not improbable on its face. What he says, even when he is most impudent, always has a well-greased reasonableness. He depicts a Conrad who is always plausible, and sometimes overwhelmingly convincing. The man emerges from behind his smoky monocle, and begins to take on the color and heat of life. How, at the start, did he happen to leave Poland and take to the sea—a matter almost as astounding as an archbishop's desertion of the sacred desk for Hollywood? The answer is found in the novels of Captain Marryat, read in the dog's-eared volumes of a French translation in a remote Polish manor-house. And how did he come by his peculiarly narrow but romantic philosophy, his reduction of all human virtues to one, his resolute fidelity to fidelity? The genealogy of that passion is traced back through generations of yearning and ineffective Polish squires, always

under the shadow of the Russian eagle. Conrad, it must be obvious, was never the standard literary gent. There was always something remote and occult about him. He held himself aloof, and was a bit disdainful, even while he accepted patronage. Ford, I think, gets at the man within the cloak—perhaps not completely, perhaps not always accurately, but certainly more nearly completely and accurately than the rest of the Conradian exegetes. Himself in youth a blatant and hollow fellow, blown up by the gases of a preposterous egoism, he was yet sufficiently in the possession of sense to know that he stood in the presence of an extraordinary man, and sufficiently skillful to observe that man with sharp care. His book is affected and irritating, but full of valuable information. No matter how violently the Widow Conrad protests in her eccentric English it will be read with joy and profit by all parties at interest. It is packed with little shrewdnesses, and it is immensely amusing.

"Tales of Hearsay" is the first cup of bouillon that the publishers have brewed from the bones of the fallen giant. It is thin and anæmic, and we might have spared it without loss. The four stories in it are all second-rate. One of them, "The Black Mate," is puerile stuff indeed—a mere anecdote, badly managed. The news is that Conrad wrote it back in 1884. Before the end of the year, perhaps, we shall have his school exercises, done in Polish in 1865, and now clawed into English by tender hands, with variorum notes. "The Warrior's Soul" is another anecdote; "Prince Roman" is an inconclusive character sketch; "The Tale" is a fable of the late war, ruined by Pinero stage settings. Put these trivialities beside the superb masterpieces in the volume of "Shorter Tales"—"Youth," "Typhoon," "Falk," and so on. It is like comparing Mark Twain's after-dinner speeches to "Huckleberry Finn." There is a preface to "Tales of Hearsay," by R. B. Cunningham Graham, which adds the final horror. I can imagine no more banal and idiotic intro-

duction to the work of a man who, even at his worst, at least showed some intellectual dignity. What Graham says is precisely what a country high-school teacher would say. It is awful stuff, almost disgraceful stuff. Let us hope and pray that the publishers will omit it from the next edition of the book, and that they will dig up some better tales to carry the four poor ones that they now print.

*"Arrowsmith"*

ARROWSMITH, by Sinclair Lewis. New York: *Harcourt, Brace & Company*.

OF Sinclair Lewis' technical skill it is unnecessary to speak. The fellow, indeed, has a vast cunning at the art he adorns and staggers—far more than any of the high-toned English novelists who swarm across the ocean to instruct and patronize Yankee blighters. If he would pull himself together, translate his very sure instincts into plain propositions, and put them on paper, the result would be the best treatise on novel-writing ever heard of. His "Babbitt" is not only an extremely engaging story, full of grotesque and devastating humors; it is also, in structure, the very model of a modern novel. It hangs together admirably. It moves, breathes, lives. From the first page to the last there is not the slightest faltering in direction or purpose. If you think that planning a novel so adeptly is an easy job, then try to do it yourself. Try, indeed, to write *any* book—that is, of more than a hundred pages. What you will inevitably discover, to your dismay, is that the author's worst peril is that of getting lost in his own manuscript—of standing blinded and gasping in the middle, unable to discern either one end or the other. Lewis never falls into that difficulty, or, if he does, he always surmounts it with great aplomb. Even in "Main Street," vast in area, crowded with people and flabby in design, he never got lost for an instant. And even in "Arrowsmith," treading unfamiliar and arduous ground and constantly confronted by technical

problems of a complicated and onerous sort, he never wobbles. Once the thing gets under way—and it gets under way toward the bottom of the first page—it thunders on in a straight line to an inescapable conclusion. There are episodes, true enough. There is what the musicians call passage work. There are moments of voluptuous lingering, as over stuff too sweet to be left behind. But there is never any uncertainty in design. There is never any wavering in theme or purpose.

That theme, in brief, is the burden which lies upon any man, in our highly materialistic society, who gives over his life to the pursuit of truth—not only the indifference and contempt which he must face, but also the positive opposition which he must face. The public theory, of course, is that the tide runs the other way. Haven't we two or three hundred universities, more than all Europe and all Asia, and don't all of them devote at least a part of their funds to keeping scholars? Aren't there scores of great foundations for research, maintained gloriously by Baptists in the oil business, Rotarians in the chewing tobacco business, Harvard graduates in the bond business? Doesn't the government itself provide three thousand jobs for scientists? Are not thousands more employed by the States, the cities, the correspondence schools, the rolling mills, the manufacturers of vaccines, tooth-pastes, oleomargarine, sheep washes, wall-papers, ready-mixed paints? All true, and yet the tragic fact remains. What ails every one of these undertakings for the fostering of science is that, whatever its pretensions on the label, it is utilitarian in the bottle—that its primary aim is to back the scientist into a comfortable stall and milk him like a cow. This is true even of the most pretentious of the scientific foundations: the glorified Babbitts who sit on their boards are all hot for "practical" results, and judge every aspiring Virchow or Rayleigh by the ease and rapidity with which he reaches them. It is true especially of the universities, which have been converted of