

BOOKS ABROAD

Die Neuentstehende Welt, by Hermann Graf Keyserling. Darmstadt: Verlag O. Reichl.

[*Neue Freie Presse*]

COUNT KEYSERLING's recently published little volume is worth being read by everybody. Here one may really find that constantly demanded 'standpoint beyond the sects' that is neither a flight from reality nor a compromise. Keyserling shows things as they are, — not, as so many novelists do, in an impressionistic way, but in order to achieve the expression of a philosophy, — and I cannot see on what grounds the picture he draws can be attacked. Whether the world he describes pleases you or terrifies you, whether you look upon it optimistically as a necessary transition or pessimistically as a collapse, depends of course on your individual attitude. . . .

I shall not attempt to convince the reader of the exceptional importance of this book by using stale superlatives. I hope I have said enough to prove that at the very least it will show him where he stands in the 'newly emerging world,' and whether he belongs with the 'chauffeurs' [Keyserling's term for the technically-minded moderns], with the romantics, or with the fore-runners of a new thought-movement which, if it becomes a reality, — as a result of its intellectual infectiousness, — will take in all mankind.

Last Essays, by Joseph Conrad. London: J. M. Dent and Sons; Garden City: Doubleday, Page and Company. \$2.00.

[*Manchester Guardian*]

MOST of the twenty essays included in this volume were written after the publication of *Notes on Life and Letters* in 1921, and Mr. Richard Curle, who edits them, believes that the book completes the publication of such of Conrad's miscellaneous writing as is worth preserving. These essays, mostly recovered from the files of the press, deal with a wide range of subjects, but there has been no ransacking of a dead man's papers to find scraps with which to pad out a book. They are all well worth their place. Five, which Mr. Curle has grouped together, were, he thinks, to have formed the nucleus for a pendant volume to the *Mirror of the Sea*. They are filled with the same finely reflective reminiscence of

great ships and of great souls in far places that marked the earlier volume. They include a long essay, written in 1924, on the fascination the old explorers had for Conrad, and the delightfully whimsical championship, after crossing the Atlantic in the *Tuscania* in 1923, of the older, sterner, simpler life of the sailing ship.

Two essays with the war at sea as their background follow — 'The Unlighted Coast,' written for the Admiralty after a ten days' cruise in the *Ready* in 1917, and 'The Dover Patrol.' A charming paper on 'Travel,' written as a preface to Mr. Curle's book, *Into the East*, well deserves inclusion. And one feels that Conrad himself would have wished that the two essays on his friend Stephen Crane should find a place. They reveal, in their intimate and affectionate account of the friendship, so much of Conrad himself that they are especially welcome. The most considerable of the other essays — a review of Galsworthy's *The Man of Property* — gives fine proof of that wide and subtle understanding of letters on which Conrad's own art was based. In the main the volume, unlike many postscripts, is of durable stuff that can take its place as an integral part of Conrad's work.

The Hounds of Spring, by Sylvia Thompson. London: William Heinemann; Boston: Little, Brown, and Company. (An Atlantic Monthly Publication.) \$2.00.

[*Times Literary Supplement*]

IN *The Hounds of Spring* Miss Sylvia Thompson adds one more to the many novels that present the Great War as an unqualified though unavoidable disaster; and there is happily a touch of individual distinction in her handling of the subject. Nor has she fallen into the common error of subordinating her characters to her theme; for Colin Russell, Zina and Wendy Renner, Hope Chase, and the few other principals, exist in their own right, not merely as the illustrations of an argument. She is justified in believing that these people are, to quote the words of her preface, 'in their infinitesimal way the human atoms which, fused by Events, go to make that subtle mass of stuff that solidifies into History.' They are, in brief, at once typical and personal; and to have made them so is an achievement that inclines one to forgive minor faults —

formal untidiness and disregard of economy — due to inexperience.

Zina is the lovely daughter of Sir Edgar Renner, a naturalized Englishman of Austrian birth; and Colin Russell is a young man fresh from Oxford to whom she is engaged to be married. She herself, when we first meet her, has not yet emerged from dreaming girlhood; she is intoxicated with life and with her lover, and when the war breaks out and he enlists she cannot for a long time realize the magnitude of the horror that has befallen. It is brought home to her finally in the obvious way; but Miss Thompson succeeds in investing the obvious with significance. When Colin is reported 'Missing, believed killed,' Zina takes a tragic leap into maturity. 'How very queer,' she remarks, frigidly self-controlled; and her heart hardens against life. In this state of petrification she remains for two years; and then, in a spirit of carelessness, tinged faintly with a sensuality born of boredom and despair, she accepts in marriage an obtuse middle-aged divorcé. Whereupon Colin, perhaps a little too promptly, reappears on the scene, having by now recovered from his shell-shock and the resultant loss of memory. To summarize the plot further would do Miss Thompson an injustice, for no summary could give an adequate idea of the freshness of treatment which she brings to an oft-told story.

The Letters of Maurice Hewlett, edited by Laurence Binyon. London: Methuen. 18s.

[Observer]

HEWLETT needed only a friend in the Antipodes to be a letter-writer of the first rank. He had a vigorous personality and a still more vigorous method of expressing it; moreover, his interests never simmered, but boiled over, and sometimes away. The bulk of this collection is composed of brief notes scribbled to friends whom he expected to meet again in a few days. But in every page, every line, is the real Hewlett tang, strong and sweet. If he thinks of a joke he shoves it in, and if he is unhappy he says so, and otherwise he keeps to business. Indeed, the letters seem not so much written as shouted to somebody in the next room. He does not begin: 'On many points I do not seem entirely to have made clear my attitude toward this vexed question.' He begins: 'Before God you do me foul wrong. There's no controversy about anything.' And

when his son is missing in December 1914, his letters to his friends, acknowledging their sympathy and communicating his anxiety, are magnificently undramatic. He ranted for a jest, but he ensued truth.

What comes out very plain is the existence beneath florid phrases and luxuriant fantasy of a curiously ascetic idealism. 'Nothing outside the world of sensation and experience interests me at all,' he writes, 'except the unceasing effort of men to get outside it.' The exception grew more and more important with the years. It was a laughing cavalier who wrote *The Forest Lovers*, and found fun in the repute and money brought thereby. The Hewlett who at over sixty moves into a cottage and starts reviewing, as being, after all, a more honest craft than writing second-rate fiction, reminds us of his Puritan ancestry. What began with the romanticism of appearances ended with the romanticism of the spirit.

Letters of Sir Walter Raleigh: 1879-1922.

Edited by Lady Raleigh. 2 vols. London: Methuen; New York: The Macmillan Company. \$7.00.

[Morning Post]

How many men are there whose collected letters — unpremeditated effusions addressed to relatives and friends — would fill two stout volumes, and make matter as lively and entertaining for the general reader as it was for the fortunate few to whom it was addressed? Until these Letters of the late Sir Walter Raleigh were published, even those who knew him best could not measure the full worth and extent of his contribution to literature. They take precedence even of his Milton and his Shakespeare, for they are a creation, albeit written by a critic in the course of criticism. They present a personality — a rare and lovable spirit, whose essential humanity could not be hidden by any professor's cap and gown. For the most part, private letters are too loaded with transient, personal things to have any interest beyond the home and the circle for which they were intended. But these Raleigh letters, though they extend over a period of more than forty years, are all alive in every line. They breathe zest; there is no dead stuff anywhere. Whatever they touch on, they kindle into interest and significance; and even when they express serious literary criticisms, they do it with the spontaneous, informal vigor of one who flings his meaning into words.

OUR OWN BOOKSHELF

Comes the Blind Fury, by Raymond Escholier.
New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1925.
\$2.00.

THE first half of *Comes the Blind Fury*, without the second half, would be inexcusable. It deals with the upbringing which two puritanical French grandparents give to the illegitimate daughter of their wayward son. As time goes on the evil element in the girl's blood becomes predominant. She seeks an independence which she is forbidden to find. While still young she suddenly loses her eyesight. From now on the spirit of the book is quite different. One observes the heroine objectively rather than subjectively. In blindness she stumbles down the same pathway as her parents before her. M. Escholier, one suspects, was considerably more successful in his attempt to make the heroine a normal creature than his translator allows us to realize. Yet, as M. Escholier has been able to conceive such a fantastic plot, it is not surprising that his characters should be unreal. One feels that the author is straining for an Ibsenian effect without the strength to attain it.

Fools and Philosophers, by J. B. Priestley.
New York: Dodd, Mead and Company.
\$2.00.

NEITHER the present title nor the alternative, *Fools — or Philosophers*, adequately suggests the variety of types in this little anthology of passages from English humorous prose illustrating the author's study of *The English Comic Characters*. It includes, that is to say, such figures as Falstaff and Micawber and Parson Adams, who are capable of combining both folly and philosophy, along with immitigable fools like Mr. Collins from *Pride and Prejudice*, and full-fledged philosophers like Mr. Shandy. Mr. Priestley has done his work skillfully, and if he has drawn pretty heavily on Dickens and Shakespeare, rejecting much equally worthy material, he has included nothing that cannot be read with at least mild mirth.

Starbrace, by Sheila Kaye-Smith. New York:
E. P. Dutton and Company, 1926. \$2.00.

THOUGH it often seems a mistake to resurrect an early work of an author who has become famous since its publication, we cannot read Miss Kaye-

Smith's second novel, *Starbrace*, without recognizing its power. It tells us the dramatic, not to say melodramatic, story of Miles Starbrace, an uncouth Sussex lad of eighteenth-century England. His adoption by and revolt against his stern aristocratic grandfather, his stormy love-affair with a young lady of quality, his blood-curdling adventures as a highwayman, and his tragic death on the field of battle, almost persuade one that the plot is worthy of the motion-picture screen. In spite of the facts that no woman can deal adequately with man in his moments of crude virility and that this novel bears not a few earmarks of an early attempt, *Starbrace* fills the bill for those who respond to a rousing blood-and-thunder adventure story, as absorbing as it is impossible.

Fernande, by W. B. Maxwell. New York:
Dodd, Mead and Company, 1926. \$2.00.

THIS novel is the latest addition to the list of W. B. Maxwell's successes. *Fernande* is an unusual woman whose contradictory personality is fatally attractive to men. Unfortunate in her surroundings as a child, she is possessed of great strength of character, which in the end responds to the challenge of a great crisis and releases her admirer Eric Bowen from an intolerable situation. The millionaire employer of Bowen is exceedingly well drawn, and stands in bold contrast to *Fernande*. The interest is well sustained, and the result of the conflict of loyalties plausible.

India, by Sir Valentine Chirol. New York:
Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926. \$3.00.

EMINENTLY suited to his task, Sir Valentine Chirol has added a notable volume to the Modern World series by this study of India. With an impartial pen he writes of the character, achievements, and ambitions of Indian and British administrator alike, and places in their proper perspective the factors that have made the India of to-day. His discussions of the caste system and the Hindu-Mohammedan conflict are conspicuously clear, and in his effort to understand the Indian character he has at least attained a high degree of success. His opinion is that certain great changes must be wrought before Great Britain can claim to have finished her work in India.