

The reason for this vagueness and uncertainty is obvious. Congress did not know what it was trying to bring about. All its political traditions were against any careful inquiry. It did not attempt to see concretely the form of organization it was aiming at. Instead it tried to enact a principle, variously phrased as free competition, or industrial liberty and equality, motivated by a vague emotion of hostility toward certain large corporations, and supposed to be enunciated in the common law phrase "restraint of trade." All the arduous work of reducing this phrase to concrete shape has been done by the courts.

It is an encouraging sign that a considerable portion of Mr. Wickersham's address is concerned with the practical problem of reorganizing corporations that have been found to be violating the Sherman law. Even more encouraging is the attempt made by Congress in the Clayton act, and described by Mr. Montague, to specify more clearly some of the illegal practices which the courts have condemned in administering the Sherman law. The attempt was not over-successful, in all probability; there are too many qualifications which introduce once more the uncertainties of the Sherman law. More promising, perhaps, was the establishment of the Federal Trade Commission, with expert jurisdiction over a large field formerly occupied by the Sherman law. Yet the new legislation, and the gradually accumulating experience of the courts, gives ground for hope that we are at last well under way on the long road which leads from the abstract to the concrete.

G. C. HENDERSON.

## A German Rebel

*A German Deserter's War Experience, translated by J. Koettgen. New York: B. W. Huebsch. \$1.00.*

THERE is a peculiarly striking internal proof of the authenticity of this anonymous experience. That proof is in the odd but welcome lack of a conventional literary method of approach—by very reason of which the true horror of war, incidentally rather than on purpose, is disclosed. The growth of insensitiveness in the combatant is sharply and poignantly revealed. Writing wholly from retrospect even the author recalls with a shock of new discovery that a few days after men had experienced nausea on viewing their first corpse in the streets of Belgium they calmly ate dinner, using the back of a dead horse for chairs and table. But a trained writer would have practised a less naïve selection; he would have kept an eye on the main chance of dramatic climax. There is no such suspicious marshalling of incidents in *A German Deserter's War Experience*, and just as the trivial incidents of the early days are recorded with no emphasis and no light and shade, so do the monotonous and awful scenes of sheer butchery towards the end of the book become almost a cliché in blood and filth. If the author had chosen to congratulate himself on his luck in escaping even minor bullet wounds, a shadow of doubt would descend over the whole narrative. It is his uncritical acceptance of his extraordinary luck that confirms one's faith in the story. There is no valid reason to question its truth.

Almost any book which honestly depicted the agony and dirt and brutalizing of human instincts that is the lot of every soldier in modern warfare might normally seem a work of supererogation to-day. There are hundreds of books which are nothing except the bitter expression of that disillusion. Yet those who have felt the impact of

war most intimately are often reluctant to make their own reactions articulate. They leave that job to the authors and journalists who spend a few hours in the less exposed trenches, who in spite of every fair effort cannot completely pierce the romantic aura of war. It persists even in phraseology. So even the three years of unpicturesque killing have but barely reached the ordinary stay-at-home consciousness. Certainly in America it is still the gentleman's idea of war which obtains; it will hardly be shattered, except in a few homes, when our own first divisions come back broken men from across the seas. Imaginative blindness and popular ignorance of war's realities can still be assumed of us. Perhaps this book, with its purchase-provoking title, may do something to dissipate that ignorance and blindness. Prospective soldiers might avoid the book, for it is destructive of all decent army morale. Who can endure the passage where the author speaks of envy—the soldier's envy of the dead? The queer surface gaiety of the English "Tommy" is the best protection against that overwhelming despair. If the experiences recorded in this book could somehow seep into the perceptions of all of us, especially the old with their natural rigidity of mind, we should not have to concern ourselves about a League to Enforce Peace. As it is, it will rekindle our determination not to become swamped in the war to the point where we forget our chief purpose—not defeat of Germany so much as defeat of war as an institution. It is only by keeping alive that determination in public opinion that our entrance can be ultimately justified.

The encouraging side of this book is the quiet record of insubordination. Even the German army is not the unified mechanism, or the blindly disciplined machine, which it is our natural and lazy impulse to picture. Best of all, the men are not one-tenth as cruel as many outward acts of cruelty would seem to testify. In fact the men were often too sentimental, at least from the officers' point of view. I like the story of the soldier who was reprimanded for giving his bread allowance to a starving Belgian family. He threw the bread at the feet of the Lieutenant, saying quietly: "The duffers and idiots have to shed their blood to preserve also your junker family from the misery that has been brought upon this poor population." The soldier received only two weeks' "confinement," and it is a comfort that most of the soldiers refused to shackle their comrades. There were certain limits beyond which even German discipline was powerless. At one spot in a wood, where several hundred Germans surprised a few score Frenchmen, who threw down their arms when they saw the hopelessness of the situation, the officers went around among the soldiers ordering "no prisoners." And no prisoners were taken from that murdered body of defenseless men—the German soldiers had no choice but to obey. Yet in the dark certain officers were bayoneted in the back. Odd, was it not, since the French were unarmed? Odder still, that it was the officers who had given the "no prisoners" order that met this fate? That hatred of cruel officers works as a genuine ferment in the German army to-day. Nor is it wholly confined to the officers. Often, says the author, it extends to the government itself, which is being suspected more and more as the instigator of the whole war. *A German Deserter's War Experience*, with its directness and almost clumsy sincerity, is a chastening and thrilling book for all of us, but it is as a symbol of revolt that one will not wish to forget it. After all, the author writes only of the first few months of the war. Since then the spirit of insubordination cannot have become

less. Reports of subterranean revolt have already reached us. And this book mirrors the origins, vividly and simply. It pictures the nucleus around which, as we so fervently hope, will slowly yet steadily gather the rising forces of anger and disillusion. It justifies one's faith that there is hope for a revolution—even in Germany. But its enduring service is in its ringing disclosure that even the French soldier fighting under the whip of hatred at wanton invasion does not loathe the instigators of this war more heartily than a few of the humblest of his German enemy.

H. S.

## Conrad's New Story

*The Shadow Line*, by Joseph Conrad. New York: Doubleday, Page & Co. \$1.35.

BEING a great innovator, Joseph Conrad can take, when he chooses, liberties which would seem, if a lesser artist took them with narrative forms, to exist for their own sake, with innovation as an end in itself. A story by Mr. Conrad often starts as if it were to sail with the wind; it goes easily and gathers way, it is almost within sight of some port of call, when suddenly the order is given to come about, and the story beats to windward, making long tacks, its purpose is forgotten, its course unaccountably changed.

Not until near the end of the story, if we are stupid, not even then if we are very stupid, does Mr. Conrad unseal our eyes. Once this miracle has been worked, however, we begin to see. We see that the narrative is intricate not because the artist, abounding in his strength, has piled difficulty upon difficulty that he may conquer them in creative joy, but because he has aimed always, and singly, at preparing us to share in his fresh insights, to feel the strangeness of places, to feel nature as no less alien when she seems man's friend than when she seems his enemy, to feel the strangeness of mankind as all the stranger for being inevitable. Mr. Conrad's path may seem at moments needlessly devious, wilfully zigzag, but he chooses it because it leads where he wants to go. He stalks the human heart. He takes his shy game unawares.

Now and then Mr. Conrad chooses to take no liberties with the old simple forms of narrative. This has been his choice in *The Shadow Line*, a story that goes straight from a beginning to an end.

A young man finds he has a few days on his hands, ashore, in an Eastern port about three days' steaming from Bangkok. A restlessness he cannot wholly explain has led him to give up his berth—a good one—and even to give up the sea itself for a while. He is returning to England. Then comes his chance, accident puts an independent command in his way, a sailing ship at Bangkok lacks a captain. From Bangkok, after a delay he can not help, and chafes under all the more because there is fever in the town, he sets sail down the Gulf of Siam. It takes him twenty-one days to make port, mostly days of light winds or none. Mate and all the crew fall sick of the fever. Everybody on board has it, except the young captain and Ransome, the ship's cook.

Yes, it is a slight story, for Mr. Conrad, although not so slight as you would think from this summary. For here, too, even when he does not wish to see deeper than several other men can, he has his own power of adding to our experience. It is we who live those endless windless days, it is our bodies that the rain wets when it falls at last.

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## THE QUALITY IS PROVERBIAL

FIFTH AVENUE AND 37<sup>TH</sup> STREET  
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With our own eyes we see the crew go silent, as if the strings life used to play on had been muted, as if flames were quietly taking their time about dying, in light airs.

Against this background, so intensely felt and rendered, Mr. Conrad paints three figures—Burns, the mate, all whose latent superstition is brought out by fever—Ransome, the born seaman, who has turned cook because he lives in terror that his heart-disease will kill him, and who puts this terror aside to help the captain, who does a sailor's hardest work when the crisis comes, does it without complaint, heroically, and whose fears take him again when the crisis is over. There is the young captain himself, on deck for seventeen days and almost without sleep. He has so much to do that he has no attention to spare for his own pluck. But he has plenty to spare for Ransome's. Mr. Conrad has given us two superb pictures of courage. We see Ransome's courage through the captain's eyes, and the captain's courage only in his deeds. Whether Ransome paid the full price for being a brave man Mr. Conrad does not tell us. But the captain's own experience was pure gain to his soul.

Is there any other reason, beside the one I have mentioned, why *The Shadow Line* seems slight, for Mr. Conrad? One other, perhaps. In the introduction, which takes up about a third of the book, we feel more and more uneasily the approach of sinister adventure. This feeling is suggested to us now here, now there, as only Mr. Conrad can do this kind of suggesting, and it grows a little too strong, a little too expectant, to be wholly satisfied by the simple and beautiful story that follows. This I say without forgetting the strange parallel between the mate's