

fell a tear, a singular tear, the loveliest of all tears (I mean for those who are "keen" on the pretty-pretty commonface sort of thing you meet by hopeharrods) for it was a leap-tear. But the river tripped on her by and by, lapping as though her heart was brook: *Why, why, why! Weh, O weh! I'se so silly to be flowing but I no canna stay!*

The changes of "years" into "tears," of "on" into "eon," of "single" into "singult" (Latin *singultus*: a sob), are typical rejuvenations.

Mr. Cort is right; James Joyce is indeed a Titan in revolt, but not the anarchist Cronus—rather that other Titan, Prometheus, the beneficent—for he is bringing to language the vital fire it sorely lacked.

The question is often asked: What is the "story" of "Work in Progress?" A complete answer is obviously impossible till the entire work has been published and we can see exactly how, as in "Ulysses," each component fits into place. Meanwhile certain aspects are already apparent. The symbolism is on a vaster scale and still more intricate than in "Ulysses." The characters have multiple personalities (they are akin, perhaps, to the Platonic "ideas") and, according to the context, the light is thrown now on one facet, now on another. Opposite Anna Liffey, the Woman, we have her composite lover, Adam, the Hill of Howth, the Salmon of Wisdom ("Solman Annadromous"—that doubled "n" of *anadromous* is rife with unseemly suggestion!), Napoleon, etc. Dublin is again the ostensible scene of action, which, however, is world-wide in reality; an equator girdling the earth, or, rather, a cross-section laying bare simultaneously all the strata of human evolution.

"Hopelessly obscure" has been the verdict of most critics up to date (the same was said of "Ulysses" at first). Obscure, yes—but not hopelessly so, and not more so than any synthesis of life which, rejecting the short cuts of abstraction, gives a living picture of its theme and deals with personalities, not axioms. And—another shock for the wiseacres!—all over its vast panorama flicker the lambent lightnings of a characteristically Irish and Rabelaisian humor. Nothing is here of highbrow gravity and the note of tragedy is rarely heard. (Nor, despite appearances, was "Ulysses" an "epic of despair," for the protagonist is Mr. Bloom, a Falstaff, and the "Hamlet young man," Stephen Dedalus, plays second fiddle to him throughout.)

For those who look the facts of life and history squarely in the face there are but two alternatives—tears or laughter. Each brings to the Great War which humanity is waging against death, despair and decay, on a front that is never "All Quiet," the outlook of his own temperament. The Irishman Joyce has the spirit of the Sammies, Tommies, and Poilus of the front line, and cheerfully hums, as the harpies of death screech round his observation post,

Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag and
Smile, Smile, Smile!

Life Is Very Original

CONFESSIONS OF ZENO. By ITALO SVEVO. Translated from the Italian by Beryl de Zoete. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1930. \$3.

Reviewed by ANGEL FLORES

ZENO, the hero of this novel, insists that "life is not difficult, but very original." His behavior always tends to prove the veracity of this, his philosophical motto. But, in a sense, Zeno's statement holds true for his literary creator. Italo Svevo, the efficient director of a Trieste paint factory, would smile, were he with us, at the surprising laudations critics keep piling on his tomb. His name is now coupled with that of Proust and Joyce as one of the great triumvirate of contemporary fiction. Life is, indeed, very original!

One day Svevo decided to improve his English. He registered in a Berlitz School only to find that his teacher was a certain Mr. James Joyce. Joyce was more than his instructor: he became his literary mentor and advisor, and soon broadcast Svevo's name with such enthusiasm that now it has traversed all the literary frontiers.

The European conflict brought hysteria to most people but, on the contrary, it gave Svevo a holiday. His pocketbook, like that of all good business men, grew fatter, and he retired, not to play golf or collect stamps, but to write. In 1923 his masterpiece, "Confessions of Zeno," appeared, and in September, 1928, he was killed in an automobile accident. He was then sixty-seven years old, and he was proclaimed one of the most arresting figures in contemporary letters. Life is not difficult, but very original!

"Confessions of Zeno" has now come to America in the excellent translation of Beryl de Zoete. Pre-

viously the English reader knew Svevo through a short story, "The Wine that Kindles," which appeared in *transition* for February, 1929, in the translation of Sommerville Story, and a novelette translated by Beryl de Zoete as "The Hoax" and published this spring. "Confessions of Zeno" is the study of a conscience (the Italian title was "La Coscienza di Zeno.") In its broadest sense, it is an exciting burlesque of the methods of psychoanalysis. Zeno is a master of introspection and analyzes every word, every action. Decisions are drowned in a sea of platitudes. He is undermined by the very old Spanish, pre-revolutionary Russia disease-abulia. His malady has for its prodromes, like that of Oblomov, indecision and hypochondria. Zeno changes his career from law, which seemed to him so remote to life, to chemistry "in the hope of finding life itself though imprisoned in a retort." Soon he goes back from chemistry to law. He decides to give up smoking, but through the 406 pages of the novel he smokes continually cigarette after cigarette. He falls in love with the prettiest daughter of the Malfenti family but, after proposing to the three sisters, marries the least attractive. The Tries-



JAMES JOYCE
A cartoon by Scheel

tian Zeno Cosini belongs, with the Don Quixote of la Mancha and the Tartarin of Tarascon, to the race of disoriented dreamers!

Svevo monkeys with the instrument discovered by Stendhal and perfected by Dostoevsky and Proust. Whether he handles the telescope or the microscope he likes to choose the wrong end to examine his object. His work becomes not a *jeu de mots* but a juicy, at times distorted, comment on the mechanics of the darker areas of the soul. In this respect he is nearer to Pirandello than to George Bernard Shaw, although both these humorous tendencies coincide and supplement each other in his robust creation.

The mind does not flow here like a stream. On the contrary it moves isochronally, each tic-tac leaving behind an infinite number of ripples and echoes. Every act becomes a malestrom, every decision a series of concatenations and adjustments. Thus even a simpleton's mind (Zeno often resembles a fool) is weirdly distorted, forever swinging among unbelievable complications.

Svevo walks boldly into labyrinths and jungles, and reappears later bearing lights of strange colors. He is gifted with irony and humor, and no writer, if we except the Blaise Cendrars of "Moravagine," and the Jules Romains of "The Death of a Nobody," has succeeded as well as Svevo in describing this twilight voyage verging on the realm of insanity. To paraphrase a felicitous thought of André Gide, one may say that after reading "Confessions of Zeno" the patterns of the old school of psychology appear more artificial and outdated than did the charts of chemistry after the discovery of radium.

The Pageant of Lorna Doone was recently played on Selworthy Green, near Minehead, Somerset, England. This was the first occasion on which the Exmoor romance had been presented in pageant form.

The pageant, generally speaking, faithfully followed the romantic story woven by R. D. Blackmore around the existence of "Girt Jan Ridd" and pretty Lorna Doone, and also round the somewhat legendary exploits of the robber Doones. The love story of Jan and Lorna is the theme running throughout the pageant.

Clinical Studies

BRIEF CANDLES. By ALDOUS HUXLEY. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1930. \$2.50.

Reviewed by LEE WILSON DODD

MR. ALDOUS HUXLEY is an accomplished writer, and he has chosen to make himself the historian and satirist of England's (or should one say, London's) contemporary decadent civilization. Mr. Huxley has a bleak, accurate eye, a pouncing, cat-like, and not too merciful understanding. Nor is he an enthusiast for the quality of mercy; he does not—one feels justified in asserting—consider it twice blest. Indeed, he would be more apt himself to assert that it curses both him who gives and him who takes—for he is exceedingly suspicious of any tendency to softness and in the neighborhood of the Christian slave-morality his temperature descends very rapidly toward zero.

In the four stories, or clinical studies, collected under the above mocking title, Mr. Huxley expends a deal of his wit, perhaps somewhat dampened by a growing prolixity, on a number of people who (from any viewpoint but that of a scientific psychologist's) are hardly worth the pains he has taken to vivisection them. That, having done so, he does in one sense enter into them and cause his readers to comprehend their visceral writhings is not to be questioned; what may be questioned, I think, is whether or not it is well to mobilize whole parks of artillery for the destruction of a few negligible Mayflies. It is possible, of course—nay, it is probable—that Mr. Huxley, having deeply observed mankind, has been forced to conclude that we are all negligible Mayflies and that any one of us will serve as well as another as an object lesson in human futility. If this be true, one can only regret the insidious myopia, now usually called "sophistication," which is blurring and distorting Mr. Huxley's eyesight. He tends to see only what is very near him, and misses a good deal that certain other, equally honest, observers have now and then been able to descry in human life.

If you have read "The Great Meadow," by Elizabeth Madox Roberts, and if its deeply woven probity, tenderness, and beauty have moved you, you will understand the more perfectly what I mean. And there are also four lines by Humbert Wolfe which are not inappropriate:

It is easier to be angry than to pity, it is easier to condemn than to understand, easier to find the celestial City than the dim counties of the Holy Land.

Man and the Stars

THE GREAT ASTRONOMERS. By HENRY SMITH WILLIAMS. New York: Simon & Schuster. 1930. \$6.

Reviewed by W. MAXWELL REED

THIS is a book which tells a story from several points of view, and always in a scholarly and inspiring manner.

One theme which runs through the volume is best summarized in the words of Mr. Williams: "A story, . . . not primarily of the stars, but of man's relation to the stars." From this point of vantage he describes man's struggle against superstition and his progress onward from mythology. For it was the expanding knowledge of the universe from epoch to epoch that gave our ancestors the power to repel the gloom of ancient myth and superstition. So the author has taken the lives of the great astronomers from the Greeks to our present time as so many pegs upon which to hang his story of the intellectual enfranchisement of the human race. With this object in view, he has very properly excluded all those events connected with the astronomers, which did not help him unfold his story, although such events in some cases might be of considerable importance in themselves.

From another point of view the book illustrates over and over again how each bit of progress has been attained only after a foundation has been laid by some previous discovery or successful piece of research. Speaking of Hipparchus, Mr. Williams says: "After all this is but another case in which the observer of one generation builds on the work of his predecessor, and in which credit for discovery is given, and justly given, to the man who makes tangible an idea that before him had been only vaguely adumbrated." In his chapter on Sir Isaac

Newton he quotes that distinguished mathematician as follows: "If I have seen further than other men, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants." The inevitability also of each step in progress in most and perhaps in all cases is made increasingly evident as one proceeds in this interesting narrative. If one man had not succeeded, another would have, perhaps a decade, perhaps a century later.

Mr. Williams illustrates in many ways how the world of scientists was prepared for the next step in progress, and how almost inevitable that next step was. For example:

It has been said that he (Jeremiah Horrox) had clearer intimations of the law of gravitation—though he died two years before Newton was born. As to that it should be recalled that a general conception of the probable truth of what came to be known as the law of inverse squares . . . was forecast by a number of Newton's contemporaries.

Another example is the discovery of the dark lines in the solar spectrum and their proper interpretation. They were discovered in 1792 by Wallaston and again rediscovered by Fraunhofer in 1815. Finally they were at least partially explained by Kirchhoff about the time that Darwin's "Origin of Species" was published in 1859.

Probably Ellsworth Huntington would tell us that this inevitability all depends upon continued favorable climatic conditions and that if we should be overwhelmed by another Permain glacier devolution might take the place of evolution. Perhaps we would repeat the history of that family of gay mammals who were proud of their progressive ancestors as they enjoyed the forests and shores of North America of long ago, but who on account of family misfortunes were obliged to devote themselves to a seafaring life and ultimately became whales. But let us take a more cheerful view and assume that we are approaching a warm interglacial epoch, wherein human happiness and comfort will exceed all descriptions of heaven in what Mr. Williams calls "oriental anthologies."

Each biography is short but told in a dramatic manner, so that the reader is less conscious of the mechanical effort of reading than is the case with most histories of science. Toward the end of the book the method of procedure by means of short biographies has been abandoned. It was necessary that it should be; for in recent years one epoch-making discovery has followed another in such bewildering profusion as to preclude the possibility of giving an adequate exposition of progress from any point of view by means of separate biographies.

This modern epoch commences according to Mr. Williams with the publication of the "Origin of Species," and with Kirchhoff's and Bunson's explanation of the Fraunhofer lines:

The year 1859 and another epoch. When the time comes to reform the calendar, it will be well to use that date for the initial year of the new era. Then occurred what in the not distant future will be recognized as the most momentous event in human history—the publication of Darwin's "Origin of Species."

By a breath taking coincidence, the same year saw the stars virtually brought to earth and analyzed in the laboratory.

Now for the first time was revealed the unity of nature of every microscopic living cell of the organic world, and the unity of nature of every telescopic cell of the sidereal universe. At last a new scientific Revelation enabled man for the first time to envisage with a measure of clarity his true position in the cosmos.

At considerable length and very clearly Mr. Williams describes the possibilities of a closed universe as conceived by Kelvin and Einstein. He elaborates the fascinating conception of the bending of the rays of light hither and thither by the curvature of space. These shafts of energy then make whirlpools and from such vortices emerge negative and positive charges of electricity called electrons and protons. Thus the circle of events is closed, for it was the destruction of matter in the heart of a star which created the light beams, the shafts of energy—from which came the cosmic eddies. Then from the nature of things, the protons and electrons are drawn together to form atoms and atoms unite to form molecules and two molecules of hydrogen may unite to form an atom of helium.

The Arènes de Lutèce, Gallo-Roman remains in the heart of Paris, are being used for outdoor performances this Summer by Théâtre Française and the Odéon players. Students of a dramatic society also presented Racine's "Andromaque" with the assistance of several members of the Odéon troupe.

A Born Statesman

WILLIAM PITT, THE YOUNGER. By P. W. WILSON. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1930. \$3.

Reviewed by DAVID OWEN
Yale University

IF ever a child was consecrated to the service of the Treasury Bench, it was Pitt the Younger. Son of the incomparable Chatham and nephew of Grenville and Temple, he entered his political career as one claims his legal inheritance. The boy was a prodigy, and it was Chatham's ambition to make of him the perfect Parliamentarian. Even as a child he breathed the atmosphere of the House of Commons; "in the nursery, in the schoolroom, at the university, he lived in its temperature," Lord Rosebery remarks. To Chatham he daily declaimed passages from Shakespeare and Milton and rendered into sonorous English sentences the Latin that he had been reading with his tutor. At Cambridge he studied mathematics and the classics. The young statesman must have command of figures, and felicitous quotations from the classics were his passport to a hearing in Parliament. Finally—and this was by no means the conventional equipment of the eighteenth century statesman—the son of Chatham had read and digested his Adam Smith.

But the greatness of William Pitt was not wholly a matter of inherited gifts or conscious training. It was the peculiar world of eighteenth century England, a world as cosy and self-contained as Berkeley Square itself, that gave the young man his chance. At the age of twenty-three this "miracle of precocity" refused the seals of the First Lord of the Treasury, at twenty-four he accepted them, and held them continuously until he was forty-two. Such an achievement would be scarcely possible to-day, when the high offices of state are usually reserved for the elder statesman. But the England of the eighteenth century was a realm in which genius could shine,—if it belonged to the right families. The House of Commons was the preserve of an aristocracy whose members were as familiar with its benches as with their own fireside, their Homer, and their hounds. As yet there were no Oxford and Cambridge Unions to serve as a Parliamentary proving-ground, but members of the governing class knew each other intimately and were acute at measuring the political prospects of their juniors. The legend is that Lady Holland, mother of Charles James Fox, reported to her husband, after having seen William Pitt (age seven), "Mark my words, that little boy will be a thorn in Charles's side as long as he lives." The young Pitt was born into this magic circle, and in the fluid and chaotic politics of the eighteenth century his genius found its opportunity.

In introducing his William Pitt, Mr. P. W. Wilson emphasizes the need for a new life of the "boy-statesman." The standard biography, that by Lord Stanhope, has been long out of print, and it is nearly forty years since Lord Rosebery's brilliant little volume appeared. A career "spent in the parliamentary and administrative atmosphere" and as a publicist has helped to fit Mr. Wilson for his task. The former has given him an easy familiarity with the methods and spirit of the House of Commons, while the hand of the journalist is apparent on every page of the book. Its merits are those of clear, straightforward narrative, written with a gratifying economy of epigram and psychological probing. Furthermore, Mr. Wilson has been at commendable pains to acquaint his American readers with the English political system and with the social atmosphere of the eighteenth century.

Since the author does not profess to have written an authoritative biography of his hero, it is perhaps ungracious to deplore his excessive reliance on the standard "Lives," especially on Stanhope. Some biographical architects can quarry all of their stone in old quarries and yet erect a structure that is essentially new and original. Mr. Wilson has not altogether succeeded at this high art. Not only has his material come from familiar quarries, but he has failed to build these isolated stones into his own plan. His work, in short, seems almost wholly dependent upon that of his predecessors.

Nevertheless, it is a pleasure to record that a life of Pitt is again available. In the main, it is the story of a born statesman, whose administration during an era of peace, might have marked the progress of a fertile liberalism, but whose "wings were clipped by the shears of necessity." Pitt, the intimate of Wilberforce, had been a crusader against the slave trade, had introduced a bill for Parliamentary reform,

and had advocated generous treatment of the Irish. But in the crucial struggle with the Revolution and Napoleon all of these interests dropped away, and there was left only the religion of patriotism. "At the end of his life he was like a tree pruned of its spreading foliage. . . ." Leaves and branches had been shot away by revolutionary cannon and withered by the smoke of battle. Only the shaft of sturdy English oak remained standing. It was not Pitt's lot to see the war carried through to success, for the news of Austerlitz killed him. But his fame has proved to be more permanent than that of many statesmen who live to sign the treaties which bring to a close the wars they have conducted.

The Newdigate English Verse Prize has been won for the fourth year in succession by a woman. This year's subject was "Dædalus," and the winner Miss Josephine L. Fielding, of St. Hilda's College. The Newdigate Prize of twenty-one guineas was founded by Sir Roger Newdigate, the "Sir Christopher Chiverel" of George Eliot's novel "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story." It is open to all undergraduates of Oxford University and was first awarded in 1806.

This year's Femina Prize, which is awarded annually for the best English work of imagination published during the past year, was won by Mr. Charles Morgan's "Portrait in a Mirror," and the Northcliffe Prize, which is a reciprocal award for a French book, went to "Le Sourire de l'Ange," by Léandre Vaillat.

Midsummer Optimism

(Continued from page 17)

existence has been its ardent inventiveness when confronted with industrial problems and its appetite for grandeur as it so far conceived grandeur. The cynical may say, "Yes, and this has produced the best plumbing in the world, skyscraper office buildings and apartment-houses, and a thousand different brands of toothpaste!" That is a part of what it has produced. But the ardent inventiveness and the appetite for grandeur are now informing works of art also, fixed with that strongly realistic vision that has already produced great railway systems and mammoth mills. It is something to feel in one's own pulse, if one is an American, though a little hard to define.

Hand in hand with these qualities go the great American failings, to be sure, blatancy, vulgarity, stridence, and over emphasis. Yet rooted in these very manifestations is a native satiric spirit—the eternal "kidding" spirit of our nation which may yet be the most potent force to save its soul alive. Here too is a tract of our literature with profound nonsense (if one may use the expression; the significant nonsense of Benchley, for instance) at one end and the rich slang of the street at the other. It is quick with the tempo of our epoch. It is not to be ignored.

So we feel optimistic in midsummer, despite the fact that the publishing business is said to have had a bad season. When the books are closed for the year we refuse to be daunted. Certainly American writing will refuse to be daunted, and out of much writing some literature will emerge.

According to the London *Publisher and Bookseller*, essays and *belles-lettres* in Britain, have this year, increased over the first half of last year by 108 per cent, technical works by 86 per cent, political and kindred books by 73 per cent, educational books by 46 per cent, children's books by 45 per cent, and fiction by 26½ per cent. (The number of novels published was 2,444, or nearly a hundred a week.) Furthermore, the increase applies to almost every price: the number of guinea books has more than doubled, and half-guinea books have gone up from twenty-three to forty-four.

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