

some, it is, on the whole, polished and witty. Her book's chief interest lies in its behind-the-scenes picture of the decades between the two world wars.

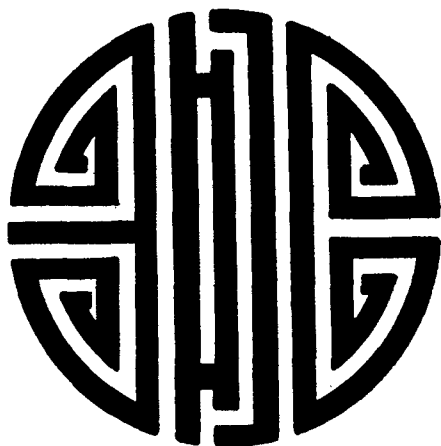
—RAY PIERRE.

HINDU FROM ERIN: In Tagore's novel, "Gora," the protagonist is a devout Hindu patriot whose father was Irish. The character was modelled on Tagore's friend Nivedita, golden-haired nun of an austere Hindu order. It was she who, on being asked to teach the poet's daughter English, replied, "Are you, a Tagore, so influenced by Western culture that you want to corrupt your child's soul before it is fully formed?" The rebuke summarized Nivedita's Indian nationalism.

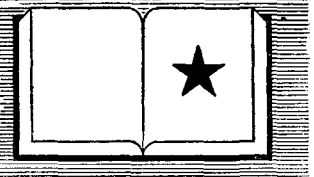
Lizelle Raymond tells the story of Nivedita's life in "The Dedicated" (John Day, \$4.50). Born in Ireland of a line of clergymen who fought to lead men to God and set Ireland free, Margaret Noble spent her youth aiding the poor and working for Home Rule. In 1896, at the age of twenty-nine, she became a disciple of the Vedantic sage, Vivekananda. About a year later she went to Calcutta where, more Hindu than a Hindu, she founded a pioneer school for poor girls and became the Joan of Arc of Indian independence.

In battling for the freedom of her adopted country, Nivedita served as underground leader, wrote and spoke boldly for the cause, travelled throughout India, Europe, and the United States to propagandize and collect funds. By lauding Mother India's cultural past and rediscovering her art, the woman from Ireland fired Indian youth with political consciousness. "Live your epics today!" she preached. India achieved independence thirty-six years after Nivedita's death. Her biographer has the spiritual insight to make us realize why the selfless Irishwoman is "worshiped to this very day as the guru of their lifetime" by many of India's great personalities.

—ANN F. WOLFE.



NEW EDITIONS



RICHARD HOPE's new translation of Aristotle's "Metaphysics" (Columbia, \$5) is remarkably lucid, and in consequence it sheds new light, for readers of English, on a work that is admittedly difficult. Professor Hope has provided no introduction; but the information that an introduction might have furnished is easily found elsewhere, and he has done something far more unusual and more useful, in giving us an elaborate "Analytical Index of Technical Terms," to which the reader is constantly referred in the text, and which lists the various acceptable Latin and English translations of the Greek words employed by Aristotle. Mr. Hope himself translates every term in as many ways as are required by different contexts and by Aristotle's own intended meanings, thereby producing a version that is immeasurably more intelligible than one based on the assumption that every Greek word must be rendered by a single English equivalent. In his subtitle he describes the "Metaphysics" as a "Postscript to Natural Science," but there are many scholars who would question the traditional order which, without Aristotle's sanction, places the "Physics" before the "Metaphysics." It is true that the second work quotes from the first, but it is also true that the first quotes from the second. Scholars who would arrange Aristotle's works in chronological order are baffled by the fact that he composed and revised a number of them simultaneously over a long period of years. But there is no doubt that he thought of the "Metaphysics" as the foundation of his entire philosophy; no doubt that it is impossible for anyone to understand this philosophy properly without studying his investigation of "the fundamental factors, the principles, and elements of primary being."

For more than a quarter of a century students and lovers of the English theatre have been deeply in debt to Allardyce Nicoll. Expanded and revised editions of his historical studies, dating back to 1923, are now being issued to form "A History of English Drama 1660-1900," of which three volumes—"Restoration Drama," "Early Eighteenth Century Drama," and "Late Eighteenth Century Drama" (Cambridge, \$7 each)—are now in print. Two more, devoted to nineteenth-

century drama, will complete the series. In each volume he follows the same pattern, presenting his material under the chapter headings of "The Theatre," "Tragedy," and "Comedy"; and in the second and third volumes an additional chapter is devoted to "Miscellaneous Forms of Drama." One of Professor Nicoll's virtues is that he firmly grounds his studies in the playhouse, with its changing conditions and conventions, its audiences, actors, and managers. Of especial value for reference are the full hand-lists of plays appended to each book. Mr. Nicoll's statements of fact are, I believe, as accurate as human fallibility permits. But some of his opinions will give the thoughtful reader pause; e.g., his contradictory views of Restoration audiences as at once vulgar and elegant, at once cultured and rowdy, at once heedless of the plays performed for their amusement and largely responsible—because of "the grace and the wit and the elegance which they brought into life and the playhouse"—for the "ease and refinement and dialogue" in the dramas through which they talked and shouted, munched and ogled, quarrelled and fought.

Joseph C. Robert's "The Story of Tobacco" (Knopf, \$5) is a far more interesting, entertaining, complicated, and important story than readers ignorant of it might suppose. The fibres of "that bewitching vegetable" or noxious weed, whichever you choose to call it, are tightly woven into the fabric of American history. . . . Good background reading with which to approach the daily news dispatches from France will be found in "Democracy in France: The Third and Fourth Republics" (Oxford, \$3), by David Thompson. Two specimen quotations: 1.) "The fundamental paradox of the Third Republican constitution was that it was a system of parliamentary sovereignty in a country where very few of the political parties or the broadly accepted schools of political thought really believed in parliamentary sovereignty"; 2.) "There is clearly nothing artificial in treating the history of the Third and Fourth Republics as a continuous record of the working of democracy in France." . . . Carl Winter's "Elizabethan Miniatures" (Penguin, 95¢) is a charming little book.

—BEN RAY REDMAN.

LITERATURE BY SLIDE RULE

(Continued from page 16)

ter than unclear writing" does not appear to be saying much that has not already been said for a good many centuries; but a man who says "I am a readability expert" has got something he can sell.

Perhaps you think I exaggerate this preoccupation of the readability boys with numbers, formulas, and yardsticks. Well, hear this: while consulting one recent and well-known volume on the subject, I found that if I wanted to test my own prose I would have to obtain a straight-edge so that, after making a detailed count of such things as personal words and personal sentences, and words per sentence, and syllables per 100 words, I could then, with the straight-edge, connect four columns of "counting" figures with two columns of "scoring" figures, and thus discover both how "interesting" and how "easy" my prose was. My own judgment—and even that of my reader—does not have a place in the formula. In still another test, I am advised to make sure that my copy does not have too high a "fog index." How is "fog index" by way of a cloudy phrase? If I may be permitted a short comment, free of long words and with presumably a low fog index, I would like to say: all this strikes me as being very silly.

IN THEIR very vocal support for their counting machines, the readability scholars have been curiously silent about three communication facts which seem to me relevant.

1.) Why has some of the most efficient and communicative language in the world—in terms of its impact—been so complex according to the scales, while some of the simplest possible prose—in terms of its word counts and sentence lengths—fails so miserably? Any standard list of "most influential books" confronts the reader with an array of authors whose fog index was undeniably high, and whose readability scores are low, such men as Hobbes, Milton, Locke, Adam Smith, Malthus, J. S. Mill, Darwin, Freud, Veblen, Dewey, and all the rest of them. But they managed to communicate, and they continue to do so. Could it be because they had something to say? I think so. And I am afraid that as much cannot be said for some of the millions of propaganda pieces now being written in a kind of Pidgin English in an effort to entrap one more reader into more clearly comprehending an idea which is not

necessarily either interesting or true to start with.

2.) Writing is essentially a two-way proposition. The existence of writers implies the existence of readers, and both readers and writers must make some effort. Mortimer Adler, for instance, has advised us that we must read a book three times, or at least from three different points of view, if we expect to extract its full content. It was Adler who also remarked that in the writing-reading relationship, as in baseball, catching the ball is just as important as hitting it. The readability advocates will retort that we should not ignore a reader simply be-

cause he has no reading skills; there are, after all, a great many unwilling readers whom "we" wish to reach. This seems to me irrelevant. There are a great many ways to communicate with people who cannot or will not read—pictures, movies, meetings, comic books, perhaps even a little more pay in the old envelope. Simply because these problems exist we need not reduce all our daily prose to a see-the-man-what-is-the-man-doing level. Writing is not the only method of human communication. To insist on stripping it down to the lowest levels of understanding is as though we were to insist on reducing all music to the primitive rhythm of a jungle beat, thus hoping to widen our audience.

3.) At times one gets the impression (though this is not entirely so) that the readability boys have ignored the difference between words and ideas—

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that, in effect, they assume that words alone can do the job. All recent psychological experiments in communications indicate, if they do not prove, that people's receptivity to communications symbols and signals depends on a very wide variety of stimuli: the personal interest they may have in the fact or idea; their preconceptions about it; whether they think the thought is significant or noteworthy; whether it is presented with authority; whether it affects their immediate welfare. In short, the research would imply that it is usually more important to sharpen the ideas than to sharpen the words. The readability boys, of course, can retort that they cannot do everything: they must take the ideas as they find them and try to express them more simply. My counterretort is that this often does not help: reliance on four-letter words can lead to a quite false impression that something good has been accomplished when, in fact, no such attainment has been reached.

LET me repeat my belief in the basic theory of readability. These days all of us must write to some extent, and as the world grows more complex the number of people who must write in order to communicate grows larger. Anybody who knows how to improve that process gets my vote. What I am complaining about is that the readability concept, basically sound, has somehow got off the track. That deviation can perhaps be traced to the possibility that the disciples have studied at two fonts of wisdom and have misunderstood both of them. One of these sources of inspiration is that of Ogden and Richards, whose inves-

tigations led to what we now know as "Basic English." The other source was without much question the pioneer work of the late Count Korzybski, who was more than anyone else responsible for the theories of general semantics. It is a sad fact that neither Ogden and Richards nor Korzybski were primarily interested in what most people today believe they were.

Ogden and Richards, for example, never thought of Basic English as a substitute for everyday English. They were more interested in the possibility of inventing a new international tongue, more acceptable and more realistic than such novelties as Esperanto. They were more interested in the idea that, in English-speaking countries, Basic might become a great teaching aid for foreigners. This idea of Basic—with only sixteen verbs and about 850 words altogether, in which you can describe anything—arose from a rather philosophical investigation into the relationship between things and the words we must use to describe things.

Ogden and Richards were primarily interested in language forms, and in the possibility of inventing a simplified form of English for very special use. Basic was always intended as an auxiliary for ordinary literary English, not as a substitute. Richards, who has written widely on the subject, has been at great pains to make this point. Anyone who thinks that Ogden and Richards felt that Pidgin English is the answer to our problems should consult their monumental work "The Meaning of Meaning," which contains some of the toughest literary going on record.

The confusion over the work of Korzybski is even more general. The word "semantics" is tossed about these days in any learned barroom conversation as though it concerned only the ease with which language can be understood. But Korzybski, as anyone can see who troubles to read his works, was only incidentally interested in the simplicity of language. You can write in one-syllable words and still, according to Korzybski, be as opaque as ever. Korzybski gets into such areas as anthropology, biology, botany, conditioned reflexes, education, entomology, genetics, mathematics, logic, mathematical physics, neurology, ophthalmology, physics, physiology, and psychiatry. Korzybski was concerned not so much with the complexity of individual words but rather with the *inter-relationship* between words and things they represent or seem to represent. Korzybski was not primarily concerned with whether a word was long or short, foreign or domestic, complex or simple: he was much more concerned with whether it had any meaning in the context in which it was used. The writers of annual reports could learn much from Korzybski. Does the writer say: "We made a great deal of progress during the year?" This might be clear to the readability boys. Short, simple. But Korzybski would ask: "What do you mean by 'We'? What do you mean by 'made'? What do you mean by 'progress'?"

In the great mainstream of people's efforts to communicate with one another there are dozens of currents and eddies. The mechanical tools represented by what we call readability techniques—useful as they are—represent and can represent only a very small part of the equipment we need. At the same time, the fact that these techniques are mechanical, and therefore capable of being readily grasped, tends to give them a popularity out of proportion to their net worth, just as their use will surely tend to create an often false sense of accomplishment. On this general subject, Lord Dunsany had something appropriate to say: "There is a great tendency nowadays to place technique above inspiration, and, if the notion spreads, we shall have the diamond cutters valuing their tools more highly than the diamonds, with the result that, as long as they cut them in accordance with the rules of the craft, they will cease to care whether they cut diamonds or glass, and then will cease to know."

This is a sentence of sixty-five words, complex in form, containing foreign words, long words. Anybody who does not understand, raise his hand.

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, and Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
TRIAL OF ALFRED ARTHUR ROUSE Helen Normanton, editor (British Book Centre: \$3.25)	1930 fact case: murder of nameless man (burning car) to account for slayer's disappearance.	Unit in Notable British Trials Series—noble fare for true-crime fans.	Good
ALWAYS ASK A POLICEMAN Seldon Truss (Crime Club: \$2.50)	Models, artists, photogs, bums, bigwigs, cops. (m. and f.) cross London stage as murder plot unwinds.	Chief Inspector Gidleigh, serene in midst of turmoil, brings home bacon.	Mid-dling
WALK THE DARK BRIDGE William O'Farrell (Crime Club: \$2.50)	NY gal, wed to Mafia prince-lings, finds strange body in apartment; cops get out guns.	Lady's predicament giving edge over detection, and yarn suffers accordingly.	So-so

—SERGEANT CUFF.