

aircraftsman, this engine mechanic. had already had a resounding public career and had become a legend in his own time. The experiences might be those of any enlisted man in the RAF, even though they are told from the point of view of a sensitive and complex human being. The reader has to keep on reminding himself that the author actually is Lawrence "of Arabia" and not Joe Doakes; for, if the truth be known, half the interest arises from the authorship and the larger story, which he never tells and which may never be told, of his flight from himself.

EVEN if it had been by Joe Doakes it would be a work of remarkable nervous power, generating its own tensions; at moments it makes one think obscurely of "The Enormous Room." Lawrence's talent, self-conscious to the point of agony, never divested itself of all its unconquerable affectations—how could it? They were part of the whole. If he tortured himself, as one often feels, with an unholy deliberation; if he reveled in those words and phrases which he was too fastidious to employ in his own speech; if he loathed his own body and had no direct experience of sex, "never having been tempted so to peril my mortal soul," these are all part of the phenomenon which made him act and write as he did. If he had not been so strange a combination of scholar, monk, mechanic, and adventurer, and in all his elements so painfully ingrown and aware, neither the story nor the style would have come to pass.

"The Mint" represents in a good many respects his own revulsion against "The Seven Pillars," which he had labored over for years, then lost, then wrote again; if "The Seven Pillars" may be called romantic, this book is anti-romantic. That, at all events, is its obvious intention. The moon and the clouds and the trees are more or less thrown in to take off the hard edges—to keep the work from being what Bernard Shaw called "too dry." But was it really possible for Lawrence to divest himself of romanticism? Almost any reader of this book would agree that it is still there, in many a passage, and above all towards the end in the dreams of an air world. His truth, his being, was all inside himself, and he died before he could struggle through his innumerable clouds to an eventual sky—before he could, in fact, become himself. From the point of view of his own character, which must always be the chief interest to any reader of his work, nothing is solved, nothing, indeed, is known, and "The Mint," by attempting to contradict "The Seven Pillars," only adds to the puzzle.

BEHIND THE BOOK



Lawrence's reading room in his Dorset home, now owned by the National Trust and open to visitors.

OF ALL THE curiosities of the book publishing business few are more curious than T. E. Lawrence's "The Mint," a present-day review of which appears in the columns at the left. For this book, which has now appeared in a limited edition at \$20 a copy, is the same book which in 1936 was locked behind burglar-proof glass in the Library of Congress, was offered for sale at the fantastic price of \$500,000 a copy, and was the subject of one of *The Saturday Review's* most famous journalistic scoops.

The story of all this goes back to 1935 when, by the terms of the author's will, it was stipulated that publication of "The Mint" be postponed until "at least 1950." It was this request which brought the fantastic complications which resulted. For, in order to preserve the copyright, his publishers, Doubleday & Co. (then Doubleday, Doran & Co.), were forced to print up fifty copies. These were ordinary enough looking books, being bound in boards and unusual only in the fact that they were a little outsize. Of them, only ten copies were offered for sale—at the half-a-million-dollar-a-copy price. There were no takers. Of the remaining forty copies thirty-eight were either retained by the publishers or returned to the author's estate, leaving two copies to be deposited, according to law, in the Library of Congress. These two copies were jealously guarded in a burglar-proof case and, in the New York Book Fair of 1936, one of them was also displayed—again behind burglar-proof glass.

It was on November 13, 1936 that *SR's* Henry Seidel Canby made the scoop which brought even more publicity to the book. After long inquiry and many complicated arrangements Mr. Canby managed to secure the Library's permission to read one of its copies provided that he did not quote directly from it. As he read the book

Mr. Canby sat under the constant surveillance of a librarian. Of this experience Dr. Canby wrote in *SR* November 21, 1936, "A librarian and I sat with a million dollars' worth of books (asking price) on the table between us; and I wondered whether one of them was worth half of it. 'The Seven Pillars' [an earlier Lawrence book] is worth a million—if you can value a great book at all. What about 'The Mint'?"

Then having read the book Dr. Canby reported, "It is not a book, it is a foundation, a porch to a great edifice that was never built, a torso, with a sketch of the whole added." He was, of course, speaking of the greater book which Lawrence had planned to write, using "The Mint" as a take-off point. But of "The Mint" itself Mr. Canby was almost as enthusiastic. "What [Lawrence] has written," Mr. Canby said, "[is] self-revealing and [has] the high literary value of all writing which makes the personality articulate. But 'The Mint' has another quality in which Lawrence is not excelled by any writer of our time—the brief but vivid merit of saga—that kind of narrative which is so good because intense experience is told with the restraint of one who knows action as well as words. . . . Unlike a man who lives in order to make books, this amateur of genius sets down what he saw and felt, leaving his book to wait upon circumstance."

Now, almost twenty years later, "The Mint" has been released to the public, again in a limited edition and again at a high price. But by comparison this new edition could be called a popular one. For it is limited only to 1,000 copies and the price is a comparatively low \$20. As its publishers, Doubleday & Co., have high hopes that this time—now that they *really* want them—they will find some takers.

—JOHN HAVERSTICK.

Peace Within a Seashell

"Gift From the Sea," by Anne Morrow Lindbergh (Pantheon. 128 pp. \$2.75), is a collection of essays discussing a woman's feeling of aloneness in the world of today and of ways to ameliorate it.

By Sara Henderson Hay

ELINOR WYLIE, in one of her best-known poems, wrote:

... I was, being human,
born alone,
I am, being woman, hard beset ...

Anne Morrow Lindbergh, herself a poet, a woman, and a perceptive and sensitive human being, submits a like text in her wise and thoughtful book "Gift From the Sea."

"I began these pages for myself," she says in a brief foreword, "in order to think out my own particular pattern of life, my own individual balance of life, work, and human relationships. . . . But as I went on writing and simultaneously talking with other women, old and young, with different lives and experiences—those who supported themselves, those who wished careers, those who were hard-working wives and mothers, and those with more ease—I found that my point of view was not unique. . . ."

It is no new problem which the author considers in this modest collection of related essays; Socrates and Plotinus pondered it, men and women of many moods and minds have wrestled with it down the centuries. It is basically the tremendous and ever-encroaching problem of how to maintain an inner serenity in the midst of the distractions of life, how to remain balanced, no matter what forces tend to pull one off center; how to be the still axis within the revolving wheel of relationships and activities.

"I want," says Mrs. Lindbergh, speaking for a host of her less articu-

late sisters, "to give and take from my children and husband, to share with friends and community, to carry out my obligation to man and to the world, as a woman, as an artist, as a citizen. But I want first of all, in fact as an end to these other desires, to be at peace with myself. I want a singleness of eye, a purity of intention, a central core to my life that will enable me to carry out these obligations and activities as well as I can."

In a characteristically poetic and beautifully valid approach to these considerations, Mrs. Lindbergh chose as the background for her book a two-weeks' vacation at the seashore, on a small island somewhere off the southern Atlantic coast. Alone on the beach, the shells that she finds and gathers propose the perfect and inevitable metaphor: those shells cast on the beaches of the mind by the long rollers of the Unconscious, not sought for, not impatiently dredged up, but awaited, with patience and faith, as that Sea's gift. And in another sense the actual shells—the whelk, the moonshell, the lowly oyster, the rare, frail Argonauta, so various in their shapes, so differing in color and texture—become the symbols of various aspects of her life. These are the shells, the shapes of life we all wear.

WITH discernment and intelligent practicality the author considers the conflicts, the pressures, the incredible multiplicity of modern life, and she suggests some clues toward the solution of a problem which is at once universal and individual. She is aware that retreat to an ivory tower, or to an eternal beach, is impossible, even if it were desirable. But every person, says Mrs. Lindbergh firmly, and especially every woman, should be alone sometime during the year, some part of each week and each day. Yet, unfortunately, the world today does not seem to understand, in either man or woman, the need to be alone.



—Lucia Nebel White.

Anne Morrow Lindbergh—"aware."

"Anything else will be accepted as a better excuse," she comments ruefully. "If one sets aside time for a business appointment, a social engagement, a shopping expedition, that time is accepted as inviolable. But if one says 'I cannot come because it is my hour to be alone' one is considered rude, egotistical, or strange."

Simplification of one's life is essential, she suggests, and a means to the integration of one's self. And the acceptance of change, or intermittency, is a lesson the shells and the sea teach. Balance, Solitude, Charity—practised at home, at the core. When we start at the center of ourselves, she concludes sensibly, we discover something worthwhile extending toward the periphery of the circle.

Admittedly, there is nothing particularly revelatory in Mrs. Lindbergh's counsel. It is sane and sound and good, and much of it has been said before, in more or less memorable fashion, by many thoughtful writers, psychologists, ministers, and family counselors. Mrs. Lindbergh expresses her views with precision and a candor dimmed only slightly by a suggestion of well-bred restraint, an innate reserve which, however ardently moved or agonized its possessor might be, never forgets its dignity. What gives the book its real distinction and individuality is, of course, the personality of its author, pervasive as her beach's sun-washed, salt-sweet air. Anne Morrow Lindbergh has the poet's capacity for investing the thing seen with its subjective raiment, of choosing the valid external symbol of an idea or an emotion. She has, as well, a quick responsiveness to the natural world about her, and a way of transmuting that awareness to the reader. And she has an appealing charm whose feminine gentleness does not conceal the purposeful integrity and resolution beneath.

