

The Tar Heel

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STAFF—Al Shortt, Pete Adams, Tom Parramore, Rolfe Neill.

Conrad In Review

Norman Jarrard

On the back of Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (Anchor Book, 75 cents) there is a quotation from F. R. Leavis's *The Great Tradition* in which Leavis says that *The Secret Agent* is an unquestionable classic of the first order.

Thus the ostensible reason for reprinting *The Secret Agent* would be that it is a very fine novel. The real reason, however, is more likely the one revealed by the title.

A novel about secret agents, social revolutionaries, anarchists, and so forth, is very timely in view of present interest in such people. Conrad's story, as a matter of fact, is based upon an actual happening in the 1880s (novel published in 1907), as Conrad tells us in his preface, with a few of the characters traceable to real people.

It is the story of an attempt to blow up the Greenwich Observatory. Mr. Vladimir, First Secretary of the Embassy of an unknown European power chooses that way of stirring up trouble it is "an act of destructive ferocity so absurd as to be incomprehensible, inexplicable, almost unthinkable." Adolf Verloc, the secret agent, is ordered to do the actual blowing-up.

Conrad's aim seems to be to

show how this act led to a domestic tragedy in which Verloc, like Iago, is foiled in the end from an unexpected direction—by his wife. All of the characters are given full characterizations albeit sometimes in a rather too workmanlike manner. Conrad seems to be at fault here. Possibly the only sympathetic treatment is given to Stevie, the half-wit brother of Verloc's wife Winnie and he may be a symbol.

Conrad takes pains to show that the other characters aren't what they seem or to make fun of them in other ways.

There is Karl Yundt, "the famous terrorist (who) had never in his life raised personally as much as his little finger against the social edifice."

Verloc, the famous secret agent, never does anything extravagant, is lazy, and has gotten "out of condition" by getting fat.

The famous Chief Inspector Heat owes his reputation to "unofficial" information he obtains from Verloc.

Of course, Conrad says that he chose to use the ironic method "in the earnest belief that ironic treatment alone would enable

The campus chimes (with silvered tones.)
Strike quarter to the hour,
Fifteen minutes left to us
According to the tower.

me to say all I felt I would have to say in scorn as well as in pity."

But he overdoes it, surely. Part of this is an overuse of paradox. For example, it is said of the "Professor" that "the lamentable inferiority of the whole physique was made ludicrous by the supremely self-confident bearing of the individual." At another place we read that "the mind and the instincts of a burglar are of the same kind as the mind and the instincts of a police officer." A character says, "You revolutionists are the slaves of the social convention."

It even affects style. We read of things like "ferocious discretion" and "eager indecision." The irony of several scenes, such as Winnie's talk with Verloc about Stevie, and Ossipon's meeting with Winnie, is so lacking in subtlety that it is painful to read.

There are good points to the novel but they are certainly less obvious than what seem to be the bad ones. The picture of the explosive-making Professor approaches satire and is interesting as such. The caricatured Home Secretary who asks his callers to "avoid details" and to "be lucid" is a good job. However, Conrad implies that he tried to avoid caricature in characterization.

THE CLOCK

John Gibson

The clock upon the restaurant wall
Reads twenty till eleven.
My wrist watch, on the other hand,
Gives us twenty seven.
The P. O. clock says fourteen to
And that is federal time,
Which every loyal soul should take
As a temporal paradigm.
My Best To You, says Jimmy Capps,
We've still got thirteen minutes,
So here's a pair of keyboard boys
Who'll play a couple spinets.
The gal I'm with, the cautious kind,
Has brought along a clock,
"When we get back", she says to me,
I'd just as soon not knock."
She'd set it by the time piece

In alderman's front hall,
And if Big Ben is working right,
There's still some time to stall.
Of course you know the ending,
And my little one's sad fate.
For with all our careful checking,
My baby got in late.
For Alderman has got a clock
(The one there by the sill)
That, no matter what the others say,
It reads later still.
By some strange secret process,
Perhaps atomic power.
That thing beats all the other clocks,
In racing for the hour.
Some day I'm going to test that clock,
And at ten return my date,
And yet I'll bet my next week's check,
She'll still be seconds late.

Say—

Tried the best steaks in town? You haven't unless you've tried The Pines.
Also: Seafood that Slept in the ocean last night.

THE PINES

On The Raleigh Road

TODAY - WEDNESDAY

"Flame of Calcutta"

In Technicolor

Starring

DENISE DARCEL
PATRIC KNOWLES

THURSDAY

George Bernard Shaw's

"Androcles And The Lion"

Starring

VICTOR MATURE
JEAN SIMMONS
ROBERT NEWTON
ALAN YOUNG

Varsity

CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 1. Book clasp
- 5. Drag
- 9. Swallows quickly
- 10. Sea eagles
- 12. Exchange premium
- 13. Agree
- 14. Corrects
- 16. Malabar measure
- 17. Tags
- 19. Exclamation
- 22. Buddha (Chin. name)
- 23. River (Fr.)
- 26. Pay, as money
- 28. Empty car (Railroad)
- 29. Inspired with reverence
- 30. Mulberry
- 31. Affirmative vote
- 32. Passes a rope through a hole (naut.)
- 35. Keel-billed cuckoo
- 37. Under-officers in churches
- 41. Nuts
- 43. Melody
- 44. Shun
- 45. Booth
- 46. Finishes
- 47. Goddess of volcanoes (Hawaii)

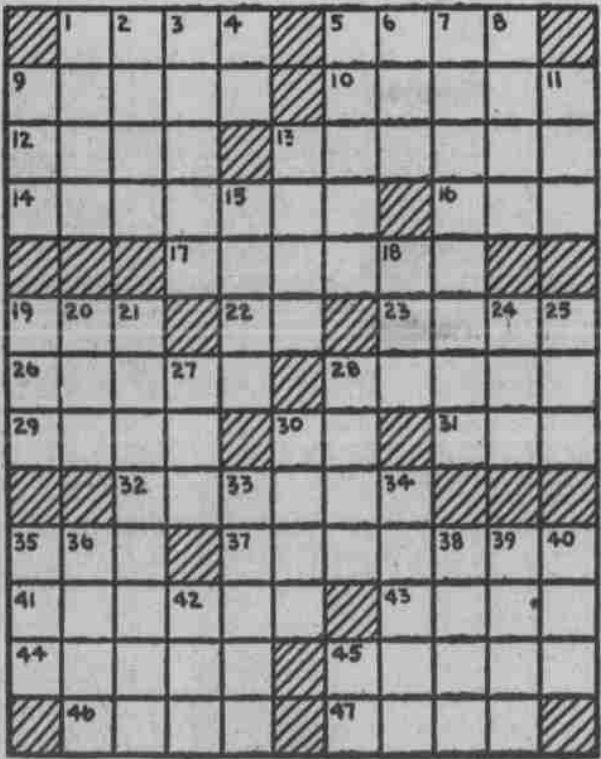
DOWN

- 1. Immense

- 2. Arabic letter
- 3. Bobbin
- 4. Postscript (abbr.)
- 5. State (Ger.)
- 6. Land-measures
- 7. Restlessly
- 8. Furnish temporarily
- 9. Pike-like fish
- 11. Pig pen
- 13. Raised desk (Early Churches)
- 15. Float
- 18. Weight (Dan.)
- 19. Constellation
- 20. Chop, as wood
- 21. Of the United States of America
- 24. Observe
- 25. Bitter vetch
- 27. Fish
- 28. The holm oak
- 30. Birds, as a class
- 33. Anglo-Saxon serfs
- 34. Declare
- 35. Mimic
- 36. Granular glacial snow



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