

He called  
Conrad  
".....an  
incorrigible,  
hopeless  
Don Quixote."



What business was there at sea for a boy from landlocked Poland? Where would his ambition lead him, a rover amongst aliens?

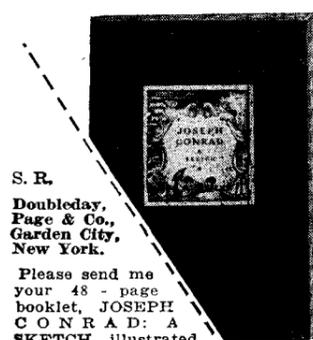
Joseph Conrad, a youth of fifteen, burning with the desire to be an English sailor, could not answer his tutor's questions.

Just then an Englishman came swinging along the Alpine road, and, as he passed the spot where they were resting he glanced at Conrad with a friendly smile. The interruption gave heart to Conrad's arguments, and suddenly, inexplicably, the tutor gave in, saying: "You are an incorrigible, hopeless Don Quixote!" It was the turning point, and a few months later Conrad sailed from Marseilles.

Later in life Joseph Conrad became recognized as one of the greatest of the English romantic novelists . . . yet many who have known him have said that his life was more romantic than any of his writings.

The best, most direct story of Conrad's life has been compiled by his publishers in a little booklet, JOSEPH CONRAD: A SKETCH. This handsome little volume, which is illustrated in colour by Edward A. Wilson, the illustrator of *Iron Men & Wooden Ships*, also contains a very complete bibliography of Conrad's works for collectors and a reading guide to his books, for beginners.

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## The Phoenix Nest

TALKING recently of this and that and the other we became involved in an argument as to whether it was better to have a conscience or a good digestion. We ourselves believe firmly that it is far better to have a good digestion. (*Inner Health and Happiness!*)

Having been slightly off our feed for several days lately we began to realize in what large part our far-famed "sunny" nature is due to an intestinal tract that has often seemed to us of cast-iron and vulcanized rubber. When it displayed weakness our amiability went with a pop. Regarding ourselves in the glass we recognized the long, grim, sallow visage of the utterly disgusted Puritan. We shuffled around planning tortures for all our intimate friends. (*But Science has solved our Problem!*)

Literary people are, as a class, not particularly notable for strong digestions. Even our younger realists probably suffer dyspeptic pangs. At least we hope so, for we are not yet, at this writing, quite recovered from ours. Of course it is old stuff to aver that a weak digestion can radically influence a man's philosophy. But, taking this for granted, and seeking to extract some hope from our situation, we began to see a glimmer in the possibility that we might yet develop into the Great Pessimist for whom, we once agreed with another American poet, the United States was suddenly waiting. (*Broken-out Minds Cured by Sulphur!*)

At the time we had that thought American literature seemed in our nostrils rather like the aroma of a cigarette which has already burned some of the varnish off the edge of a desk. You know how it is. You take a puff—! (*That Delicious Smoked Herring Flavor!*)

But then, just as we were formulating the most devastating of creeds, we began to feel better. Our physiology revived and strengthened. Life assumed a less yellow tinge. We looked out and noted that the weather was sunny and what is commonly known as "bracing." We felt that we could leave our office no longer to totter mildewed along soiled and sordid byways, but, on the other hand, rosily to ramble down mellowly sunlit streets. The loathsome faces of our friends seemed a trifle less insulting. The atmosphere increased in ozone. (*Golden Vacation-Time!*)

At that moment a special messenger thrust into our hands an advance copy of our favorite magazine (*Over Twenty-five Billion Circulation!*) with the compliments of said magazine's promotion department. We fingered it idly, glanced down a page, and our eye hit this free verse by an eminent English novelist and critic:

I do not want money.  
I do not want fame.  
I do not want a life of gaiety.  
I do not want possessions, in the sense of jewels, automobiles, villas on the Riviera and town houses, slaves, or gold and silver plate.  
I do not want innumerable acquaintances.  
I do not want contentment.  
I do not want "For he's a jolly good fellow" to be sung when I rise to my feet.  
Frank's wrong about some things! Even in the first flush of our new well-being he gave us a shock or two.  
We do want money. We have bills.  
Fame is money.  
A life of gaiety hits us where we live.

No—not jewels. How would we wear 'em?  
No—we can't drive a car and our friends can.  
No—no villas. Just a great big house full of servants. Town and country.  
No—we must draw the line at slaves.  
Our gold and silver in coin, please,—no plate.  
Few acquaintances, but all beverageable.  
Would rather not rise, anyway.

But after tabulating these frank emendations or emendations to Frank, we discovered that we had now lost out on the chance of becoming the Great Pessimist. In fact—it's terrible. Everything in America, including our digestion, conspires against really significant pessimism. It isn't that things aren't bad enough. But every magazine you pick up and all the ads around you in the street and on the train are constantly punching at you with, "The Bath Soap that renews your Vitality!", "America's Summerland is calling You!", "Ten-minute Shampoo!", "Diamonds!", "Trim ankles can be Yours!", "Zip!" "Glazo," "Eno," "Softly, a Gainsborough Puff," "Gray Hair Gone," "Nerves—Nix!", "Wrinkles just Waft!", "Keepyeraircomed," "Deaf? A Post-card!", "Verisimple—Banish Pimple," "Housebuilt—costs Nothing!", "Hush, flush, Vericlene," "Blush? Mush! Glistarine," "Dandie Floors," "Perfect Power," "Handy Doors," "Like a Flower—," and so on, and so on, with gathering impetus and powerful impact. Have you a problem, except how to pay for all these things? They banish it! And in America the breath of our nostrils seems to be to live on trust. From morning till even we are reassured and reassured about every possible minor worry. By the ads, by the ads! There is an answer to everything. Affluence is just around the corner, and every kind of concomitant comfort. All this of course is also *What You Must Have*, no shirking that conclusion and trying to be different! It is not only your duty but it becomes precious near a public command that you keep your clothes pressed, your teeth brushed, your hair oiled, your ticket a commuter's, your house a "home," your life a perfect panorama of accessories, beginning with your car and your radio. All of course in a spirit of the utmost cheerfulness, all leading up to the great suburban ideal, all rosily tinted with the flush of complete health and amazing animal vigor to be released upon the invention of new toothpastes, radiolas, nose-rebuilders, unflammable carpets, unbreakable furniture, unstainable table-linen, unchippable building brick, and seventeen different kinds of unpuncturable tires! (*Four out of Five! Four out of Five!*)

But the literary gent, *without* a wooden leg and now quite recovered from his transient dyspepsia, sits aghast at his own new energy which cannot be turned to these uses. *Cannot—I had almost said!* Think of it! Oh the blasphemy! Why, all one needs is a sudden glowing faith in some new kind of ink eraser or cuticle freshener, in some new sunbeam in your home luxury that people know not yet that they need! Your fortune is made, weary *littérateur!* You were in the wrong pew, that's all! *Wake up! Get hep!* Can you write *copy*? No? Our Special Correspondence Course in Sixty Easy Lessons! *A Dollar down and a Dollar—.*

And so now we have got indigestion again!  
W. R. B.

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