THE
CAMBRIDGE EDITION OF
THE WORKS OF
JOSEPH CONRAD
LAST ESSAYS

Frontispiece to the 1926 Dent edition of Last Essays: facsimile of the last leaf of ‘Legends’
THE CAMBRIDGE EDITION OF THE WORKS OF JOSEPH CONRAD

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JOSEPH CONRAD

LAST ESSAYS

EDITED BY
Harold Ray Stevens and J. H. Stape

WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF
Mary Burgoyne and Alexandre Fachard

THE CONGO DIARY
CO-EDITED AND WITH EXPLANATORY NOTES BY
Owen Knowles and Harold Ray Stevens
Published in association with

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NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

RESEARCH AND GRADUATE STUDIES, KENT STATE UNIVERSITY
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Illustrations</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Editors’ Preface</td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>xv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronology</td>
<td>xviii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviations and Note on Editions</td>
<td>xxiv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origins</td>
<td>xxix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Essays</td>
<td>xxxvi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reception</td>
<td>xlvii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LAST ESSAYS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GEOGRAPHY AND SOME EXPLORERS</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Torrens: A Personal Tribute</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas-day at Sea</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocean Travel</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside Literature</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legends</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Unlighted Coast</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Dover Patrol</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorandum</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Loss of the Dalganar</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel: Preface to Richard Curle’s Into the East</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen Crane: Introduction to Thomas Beer’s Stephen Crane</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His War-book: Introduction to Stephen Crane’s The Red Badge of Courage</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Galsworthy: An Appreciation</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Glance at Two Books</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ix
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preface to <em>The Shorter Tales of Joseph Conrad</em></td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cookery: Preface to Jessie Conrad’s <em>A Handbook of Cookery for a Small House</em></td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Future of Constantinople</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>THE CONGO NOTEBOOKS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Congo Diary</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up-river Book</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UNCOLLECTED ESSAYS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Silence of the Sea</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author’s Note to <em>Youth and Gaspar Ruiz</em></td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introductory Note to <em>A Hugh Walpole Anthology</em></td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreword to <em>Landscapes of Corsica and Ireland</em> by A. S. Kinkead</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreword to <em>Britain’s Life-boats: The Story of a Century of Heroic Service</em> by A. J. Dawson</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>THE TEXTS: AN ESSAY</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Editions</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copy-texts</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emendation</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Essays</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncollected Essays</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cambridge Texts</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>APPARATUS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emendation and Variation</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emendations of Accidentals</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>APPENDICES</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Richard Curle’s Introductions to <em>Last Essays</em> and ‘The Congo Diary’</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B The <em>Dalgonar Incident: The London Mercury</em> Texts</td>
<td>369</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C Preface to <em>The Shorter Tales of Joseph Conrad</em>: Two Rejected Drafts</td>
<td>376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Note on the <em>Torrens</em> and Notes for ‘Travel’</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E ‘Geography’: <em>Ur</em>-version of ‘Geography and Some Explorers’</td>
<td>381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textual Notes</td>
<td>391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanatory Notes</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossary of Nautical Terms</td>
<td>474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maps</td>
<td>481</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ILLUSTRATIONS

Frontispiece to the 1926 Dent edition of Last Essays: facsimile of the last leaf of ‘Legends’  

FIGURES

1 First typescript of ‘Geography and Some Explorers’, page 9  
Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University  
2 Typescript of ‘The Torrens: A Personal Tribute’, page 3  
Rare Books Department, Boston Public Library  
3 Entry for ‘To day’s march Saturday 5th July’, ‘The Congo Diary’, pages [10–11]  
Houghton Library, Harvard University  
Houghton Library, Harvard University  
5 ‘XII Entrance to Kassai rather broad’ and ‘XII After passing Pt xx follow’, ‘Up-river Book’, pages [21–22]  
Houghton Library, Harvard University  
Houghton Library, Harvard University  
7 ‘Dazed Scientific Investigator’, Punch, or The London Charivari, 19 July 1922, page 67  
Reproduced with the permission of Punch Limited  
8 Genealogy of ‘Geography and Some Explorers’  

MAPS

1 Conrad’s overland journey in the Congo from Matadi to Nselemba, June–August 1890  
2 Route of the Roi des Belges, August–September 1890  
3 Stanley Pool  
4 Routes of the Torrens and the Otago
J O S E P H C O N R A D ’ s place in twentieth-century literature is now firmly established. Although his novels, stories and other writings have become integral to modern thought and culture, the need for an accurate and authoritative edition of his works remains. Owing to successive rounds of authorial revision, transmissional errors and deliberate editorial intervention, Conrad’s texts exist in various unsatisfactory and sometimes even confused forms.

During the last years of his life he attempted to have his works published in a uniform edition that would fix and preserve them for posterity. But although trusted by scholars, students and the general reader alike, the received texts published in the British and American collected editions, and in various reprintings of them since 1921, have proved to be at least as defective as their predecessors. Grounded in thorough research in the surviving original documents, the Cambridge Edition is designed to reverse this trend by presenting Conrad’s novels, stories and other prose in texts that are as trustworthy as modern scholarship can make them.

The present volume contains critical texts of Conrad’s posthumously published volume Last Essays, compiled and edited by his friend Richard Curle acting as his literary executor. Curle’s contents and arrangements are respected; however, Conrad’s ‘Up-river Book’ has been added as an integral element of the volume. Also reprinted here are uncollected pieces by Conrad that Curle did not include in the volume he produced. The Cambridge texts of the essays are based on various copy-texts – the manuscripts, typescripts and early printings that have survived – and incorporate readings drawn from later authoritative documents as well as editorial emendations. The ‘Appendices’ reprint Curle’s introductions to Last Essays and ‘The Congo Diary’, offer supplementary material for appreciating Conrad’s letter on the loss of the Dalogmar and publish the following items for the first time: two rejected draft openings to the ‘Preface to The Shorter Tales of Joseph Conrad’; a draft of Conrad’s prefatory note to his essay on the
General Editors’ Preface

Torrens; draft material for ‘Travel’; and ‘Geography’, the Ur-version of ‘Geography and Some Explorers’.

The ‘Introduction’ provides a literary history of the work focused on its genesis, sources and reception, including its place in Conrad’s life and art. The essay on ‘The Texts’ traces the textual history of the volume, examines the origins of its individual texts and explains the policies followed in editing them. The ‘Apparatus’ records basic textual evidence, documenting the discussion of genealogy and authority in ‘The Texts: An Essay’ as well as other editorial decisions, and the ‘Textual Notes’ deal with cruxes and textual issues. The ‘Explanatory Notes’ comment on specific readings that require glosses, dealing with sources, identifying real-life place-names and related matters, as well as explaining nautical terms and foreign words and phrases. Supplementing this material are maps and illustrations.

Although they may interest the great variety of readers, the ‘Introduction’ and ‘Explanatory Notes’ are intended primarily for a non-specialist audience, whereas the textual essay and ‘Apparatus’ are designed with the textual scholar and specialist in mind.

The support of the institutions listed on p. vii has been essential to the success of this series and is gratefully acknowledged. In addition to those, and the individuals and institutions listed in the ‘Acknowledgements’, the General Editors and the Editorial Board also wish to thank the Trustees and beneficiaries of the Estate of Joseph Conrad, Doubleday and Company and J. M. Dent and Company for permission to publish these new texts of Conrad’s works.

The General Editors
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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We join with Mary Burgoyne, who gathered the materials for the uncollected essays and arranged for reproduction of the Punch cartoon, in duly thanking the following individuals: Amanda Corp, Head of the Issue Desk, the London Library; André Gailani, Picture Research and Permissions, Punch Limited; Marianne Hansen, Special Collections Librarian, Mariam Coffin Canaday Library, Bryn Mawr College; Mike Kelly, Curator of Books, Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University; Laurie Klein, Public Services Assistant, the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University; and Aaron Zacks, Technology and Digital Services Intern, the Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

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Whitehall Library and to the Public Records Office (now the National Archives). Gratitude is also due to David W. Tutein for answering queries. He is grateful to Donald W. Rude and to Allan H. Simmons, the editors, respectively, of *Conradiana: A Journal of Joseph Conrad Studies* and *The Conradian: The Journal of the Joseph Conrad Society (UK)*; to Wieslaw Krajka, general editor of the ‘Conrad: Eastern and Western Perspectives’ series; and to Robert Langenfeld, editor of *English Literature in Transition, 1880–1920*, for permission to use material that appeared in earlier versions of work adapted here. His gratitude is likewise expressed to Suzanne Paris of Greenwood Press for permission to adapt materials from his essay in *A Joseph Conrad Companion* (1999), edited by Leonard Orr and Ted Billy.

Harold Ray Stevens also wishes to express thanks to the office of the Dean of Academic Affairs of McDaniel College for a sabbatical leave and a travel grant for work on this edition. He is especially grateful to Ruth Ann Stevens, who not only has served as second reader and fellow-traveller in Conrad studies for four decades, but also for more than fifty years has provided support and encouragement in ways too numerous to record here.

J. H. Stape is indebted to the Harry Ransom Center, the University of Texas at Austin, for an Alfred A. and Blanche W. Knopf Fellowship during the 2008–9 award period.

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The facsimiles and illustrations that precede the textual essay are reproduced by courtesy of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University; Punch Limited; the Rare Books Department, Boston Public Library; and the Houghton Library, Harvard University.
CHRONOLOGY

Joseph Conrad’s life may be seen as having several distinct stages: in the Ukraine, in Russian exile and in Austrian Poland before his father’s death (1857–69); in Austrian Poland and the south of France as the ward of his maternal uncle (1870–78); in the British merchant service, mainly as a junior officer sailing in the Far East and Australia (1878–early 1890s); after a transitional period (early 1890s), as a writer of critical esteem (1895–1914); as an acclaimed writer, although perhaps with his greatest work achieved (1914–24). After 1895 the history of his life is essentially the history of his works.

Publication dates given below are those of the English book editions, unless otherwise specified. Only the first serial appearance of essays is noted.

1857 December 3 Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski (Nałęcz coat-of-arms) born in Berdyczów in the Ukraine, part of the Russian Empire, to Apollo Korzeniowski and Ewelina (or Éwa), née Bobrowska, Korzeniowska

1862 May Apollo Korzeniowski, his wife and son forced into exile in Russia

1865 April Ewa Korzeniowska dies of tuberculosis

1867 Conrad visits Odessa with his maternal uncle Tadeusz Bobrowski; perhaps his first view of the sea

1868 Korzeniowski permitted to leave Russia

1869 February Korzeniowski and Conrad move to Cracow

1870 May Korzeniowski dies

1873 May Conrad, ward of Bobrowski, begins study with tutor, Adam Pulman

Visits Switzerland and northern Italy
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1874</td>
<td>October Takes position in Marseilles with Delestang et Fils, wholesalers and shippers</td>
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<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>Apprentice in <em>Mont-Blanc</em> (to Caribbean)</td>
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<td>1876</td>
<td>In <em>Saint-Antoine</em> (to Caribbean)</td>
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<td>1878</td>
<td>late February Attempts suicide</td>
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<td>or early March</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>April Leaves Marseilles in British steamer <em>Mavis</em> (Mediterranean waters)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>June Lands at Lowestoft, Suffolk; first time in England</td>
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<td></td>
<td>July–September Sails as ordinary seaman in <em>Skimmer of the Sea</em> (North Sea)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1878–80 In <em>Duke of Sutherland</em> (to Sydney), <em>Europa</em> (Mediterranean waters)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>Meets G. F. W. Hope and Adolf Krieger</td>
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<tr>
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<td>June Passes examination for second mate</td>
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<tr>
<td>1880–81</td>
<td>Third mate in <em>Loch Etive</em> (to Sydney)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881–4</td>
<td>Second mate in <em>Palestine</em>, <em>Riversdale</em>, <em>Narcissus</em> (Eastern seas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>December Passes examination for first mate</td>
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<tr>
<td>1885–6</td>
<td>Second mate in <em>Tilhurst</em> (to Singapore and India)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>Submits ‘The Black Mate’, perhaps his first story, to <em>Tit-Bits</em> competition</td>
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<td></td>
<td>August Becomes a British subject</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>November Passes examination for master and receives ‘Certificate of Competency’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886–7</td>
<td>Second mate in <em>Falconhurst</em> (British waters)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887–8</td>
<td>First mate in <em>Highland Forest</em>, <em>Vidar</em> (Eastern seas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888–9</td>
<td>Captain of barque <em>Otago</em> (Bangkok to Australia and Mauritius)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>autumn Begins <em>Almayer’s Folly</em> in London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>February–April In Poland for first time since 1874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May–December In the Congo. Second-in-command, then temporarily captain, of <em>Roi des Belges</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>June 13 Arrives at Matadi. Begins ‘The Congo Diary’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>August 3 Leaves Kinshasa in <em>Roi des Belges</em>. Begins ‘Up-river Book’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
xx CHRONOLOGY

1891 Manages warehouse of Barr, Moering in London

1891–3 First mate in Torrens (London and Plymouth to Adelaide)

1893 Meets John Galsworthy and Edward L. (‘Ted’) Sanderson (passengers on Torrens)

autumn Visits Bobrowski in the Ukraine

November Signs on as second mate in Adowa, which sails only to Rouen and back

1894 January Signs off Adowa, ending his career as a seaman

February Bobrowski dies. Meets Edward Garnett and Jessie George

1895 April Almayer’s Folly

1896 March An Outcast of the Islands. Marries Jessie George

September Settles in Stanford-le-Hope, Essex, after six-month honeymoon in Brittany

1897 Begins friendship with R. B. Cunninghame Graham; meets Henry James and Stephen Crane

December The Nigger of the ‘Narcissus’

1898 Meets Ford Madox (Hueffer) Ford and H. G. Wells

January Alfred Borys Leo Conrad born

April Tales of Unrest

October Moves to Pent Farm, Postling, near Hythe, Kent, sub-let from Ford

1899 February–April ‘The Heart of Darkness’ in thousandth number of Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine

1900 September Begins association with literary agent J. B. Pinker

October Lord Jim

1901 June The Inheritors (with Ford)

1902 November Youth: A Narrative and Two Other Stories

1903 April Typhoon and Other Stories

October Romance (with Ford)

1904 March Writes ‘A Glance at Two Books’ (published August 1925)

October Nostromo
1905 June
One Day More staged in London

1906 March
‘A Middle Class Family’ (later ‘John Galsworthy’) in Outlook

August
John Alexander Conrad born

October
The Mirror of the Sea

1907 January
Writes ‘Cookery’, preface to A Handbook of Cookery for a Small House by Jessie Conrad (published as a pamphlet September 1921)

September
The Secret Agent. Moves to Someries, Luton, Bedfordshire

1908 August
A Set of Six

1909
Moves to Aldington, Kent

September
‘The Silence of the Sea’ in Daily Mail

1910
Moves to Capel House, Orlestone, Kent

1911 October
Under Western Eyes

1912 January
Some Reminiscences (as A Personal Record in America)

October
‘Twixt Land and Sea

November

1913 September
Chance, with ‘main’ publication date of January 1914

1914 July–November
Visits Austrian Poland with family; delayed by outbreak of First World War; returns via Vienna and Genoa

1915 February
Within the Tides

September
Victory

1916 September–November
Observes First World War naval activity aboard Q-ship Ready; writes ‘Admiralty Paper’ (later ‘The Unlighted Coast’)

1917 March
The Shadow-Line

1919 March
Moves to Spring Grove, near Wye, Kent. Dramatic version of Victory opens in London

August
The Arrow of Gold

October
Moves to Oswalds, Bishopsbourne, near Canterbury, Kent
Chronology

1920
May
Writes on ‘Gaspar Ruiz’ for Dent’s school edition *Youth and Gaspar Ruiz*.

*The Rescue*

June

July
Writes ‘Memorandum’ on Liverpool training-ship.

1921
January
‘Introductory Note to A Hugh Walpole Anthology’ requested by Hugh Walpole.

January–April
Visits Corsica. Collected editions begin publication in England (Heinemann) and in America (Doubleday).

February
*Notes on Life and Letters*

July
‘Heroes of the Straits’ (later ‘The Dover Patrol’) in *The Times*.

October
Writes foreword to *Landscapes of Corsica and Ireland* by A. S. Kinkead.

December

1922
July–August
 Writes preface (later ‘Travel’) to Richard Curle’s *Into the East: Notes on Burma and Malaya* (published March 1923).

October
Preface to *A Handbook of Cookery for a Small House* by Jessie Conrad opens serialization of extracts from her book in *Woman’s Pictorial Magazine*.

November
*The Secret Agent* staged in London.

December
‘Notices to Mariners’ (later ‘Outside Literature’) in *Manchester Guardian*.

1923
February
*A Handbook of Cookery for a Small House* by Jessie Conrad with preface by Conrad.

March
Writes introduction to Thomas Beer’s *Stephen Crane: A Study in American Letters*.

May
‘My Hotel in Mid-Atlantic’ (later ‘Ocean Travel’) in *Evening News*.

May–June
Visits America, guest of F. N. Doubleday.

October

November
Foreword to *Britain’s Life-boats: The Story of a Century of Heroic Service* by A. J. Dawson.
<table>
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<th>Date</th>
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| December 1924 | 'The Romance of Travel' (later 'Geography and Some Explorers') in *Countries of the World*.
|              | Begins 'Preface to *The Shorter Tales of Joseph Conrad*'.               |
| May 1924      | Declines knighthood                                                    |
| August 3 1924 | Dies at Oswalds. Roman Catholic funeral and burial, Canterbury        |
| August 15 1924| 'Legends' in *Daily Mail*                                              |
| September 1925| *The Nature of a Crime* (with Ford)                                    |
| October 1925  | *The Shorter Tales of Joseph Conrad* (30 October in America)           |
| 1925 January  | *Tales of Hearsay*                                                    |
| August 1925   | 'The Enterprise of Writing a Book' (later 'A Glance at Two Books') in *T. P.’s & Cassell’s Weekly*. 'The Unlighted Coast’ in *The Times* |
| September 1925| *Suspense* (unfinished)                                                |
| October 1925  | 'The Congo Diary’ in *Blue Peter*                                     |
| October 3–9   | Curle drafts introduction to *Last Essays* on the *Mauretania*, on voyage to New York |
| October 9     | Curle arrives in New York City to discuss volume with Doubleday; during trip consults ‘The Congo Diary’ at Harvard University |
| November 3    | Curle returns to England; preparations of book typescript and attending to proofs occur over next few months |
| 1926 February 12 | Dent’s receive first print order of *Last Essays*                     |
| March 3 1928  | *Last Essays* published in England (26 March in America)               |
| 1928 June     | *The Sisters*                                                          |
ABBREVIATIONS AND NOTE ON EDITIONS

ABBREVIATIONS

[London is the place of publication unless otherwise specified.]

Bibliography

CDP

Chronology

CWW
Norman Sherry, Conrad’s Western World. Cambridge University Press, 1971

Documents

Knowles and Stape

Letters

Miłobędzki
Józef Miłobędzki, ed. ‘Joseph Conrad’s Congo Diary’, Nautologia (Gydnia), 7, no. 1 (1972), 7–53

Najder

xxiv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS


LOCATIONS OF UNPUBLISHED DOCUMENTS

Berg  Berg Collection, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

BL  British Library

Bodleian  Bodleian Library, Oxford University

Boston  Boston Public Library

Bryn Mawr  Mariam Coffin Canaday Library, Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania

Colgate  Everett Needham Case Library, Colgate University, Hamilton, New York

Dartmouth  Baker Library, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire

Harvard  Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts

HRC  Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin

Indiana  Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington

Morgan  Pierpont Morgan Library, New York

National Archives  National Archives of the United Kingdom

NGS  Archives of the National Geographic Society, Washington, DC

NYU  Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University, New York

Rosenbach  Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia

TTU  Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University, Lubbock

Virginia  Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville
List of Abbreviations

Yale | Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut
Yale-S | Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University

Note on Editions

References to Conrad's works are to the Cambridge Edition of the Works of Joseph Conrad where these have been published. Otherwise, references are, for the sake of convenience, to Dent's Collected Edition, 1946–55, whose pagination is identical with that of the various 'editions' published by Doubleday throughout the 1920s. References to the Cambridge Edition take the following form: title (year of publication), whereas publication dates are not provided for citations from Dent's Collected Edition.

Citations from critical and other works are to author, title and date of publication.
INTRODUCTION

Published in March 1926, less than two years after Conrad’s death, Last Essays is both an unlikely and rather predictable posthumous volume. Its unlikelihood stems from its heterogeneity and scope: it brings together pieces written during the last thirty-four of Joseph Conrad’s sixty-six years, encompassing facets of his literary and maritime careers as well as his personal life. The book’s functional title and arrangement are the work of a close friend, the journalist Richard Curle, his literary executor. An act of homage to a writer of preeminent significance, it was also published to benefit the writer’s widow and sons, taking advantage of the fame and genuine popularity Conrad had achieved by the end of his life.

The ‘essays’ – a title of convenience for a medley of genres including reviews, diaries, introductions to books and reminiscences – range from an abridged version of a notebook that records events during and observations about Conrad’s life-transforming experience in the Congo Free State in 1890 to ‘Legends’, an essay left unfinished on his desk when he died near Canterbury on 3 August 1924. The earliest piece, ‘The Congo Diary’, pencilled into one of two notebooks that record Conrad’s initiation into life along the Congo river, provides the raw material for understanding why he rejected colonial exploitation while participating in it, a stance that would lead him to write ‘An Outpost of Progress’ and ‘Heart of Darkness’. In ‘Legends’, a fragment that ends (and closes Conrad’s career) with the word ‘yarn’, he was exploring ways in which memory, personal interests and the passage of time can transform the facts of life into legend, a theme present in critical reactions to his work: ‘The facts of a legend need not be literally true. But they ought to be credible and they must be in a sort of fundamental accord with the nature of the life it records that is with the character of its subject-matter.’

1 For details of the writing, revision and original printing of the texts collected in this volume, as well as for a history of its production and publication, see ‘The Texts’, pp. 189–272.
Introduction

Last Essays illustrates the range of Conrad’s thought on diverse topics, and its ‘subject-matter’ is almost bewilderingly diverse, yet, like Notes on Life and Letters (1921), which Conrad himself saw into print, it serves, as it were, as an instalment in autobiography, showing the wide range of the writer’s interests. These include the transition from militant geographers in ships under sail to merchant seamen in steamships; the rigging of sailing ships and attention to the technical aspects of international travel and to the training of merchant seamen; reminiscences of experiences both on land and at sea; the human element in travel and the progress of the Roi des Belges up the Congo river. The First World War, which continued to dominate the life of England long after 1918, is also inevitably present in this volume, in Conrad’s first-hand observations of the exploits of men aboard the Q-ship HMS Ready. He also pays tribute to the men of the Cinque Ports and to the heroism of the Dover Patrol, which kept enemy forces off the coast.

The volume includes literary criticism: introductions to works by Curle and Stephen Crane and reviews of books by John Galsworthy and W. H. Hudson. Its diversity ranges from the domestic subject of cookery to advice about the future of Constantinople and control of the Dardanelles and the Bosporus Straits. Across the volume are insights into the human condition, most particularly perhaps in the threadbare observations about his experience in the Congo Free State, where he witnessed the ivory trade, slavery and exploitation, ‘horrors’ that altered his view of life and later turned into fiction. Unsurprisingly for a writer whose canon includes a trio of political novels (Nostromo, The Secret Agent, Under Western Eyes) Conrad also meditates on geopolitics, concentrating on the force that shaped his early life – Russian hegemony over Central and Eastern Europe – and on the Eastern Question that had bedevilled European affairs from before his birth.

Complementing excursions into impressionism and experiments with irony and point of view, the essays illustrate Conrad’s wide narrative range, from the functional prose of ‘The Congo Diary’, the ‘Up-river Book’ and the ‘Memorandum’ to a record of his thoughts on the need to differentiate between aesthetic and utilitarian writing in ‘Outside Literature’. These forays are balanced by an attempt to discuss the manipulation of fact in the shaping of reputations and biography in ‘Legends’ and an unsuccessful struggle to combine the two in ‘The Unlighted Coast’.
INTRODUCTION

ORIGINS

LAST ESSAYS brings together the nine essays Conrad wrote after the publication of Notes on Life and Letters (1921):1 six that Curle arranged to have published separately with Jessie Conrad’s concurrence after her husband’s death;2 one that Conrad overlooked when compiling the previous volume; one (‘Cookery’) written originally in 1907 as the ‘Preface to Jessie Conrad’s A Handbook of Cookery for a Small House’, but which was not published until 1921; and two pieces printed for the first time (the ‘Memorandum’ and the second part of ‘The Future of Constantinople’). The forgotten essay, ‘John Galsworthy: An Appreciation’ (1906), was a matter of embarrassment to the writer. A similar fate might have befallen ‘The Future of Constantinople’, a letter to The Times of November 1912, with a previously unpublished draft of a second document responding to criticism of, and elaborating upon, comments in the letter.

Richard Henry Parnell Curle (1883–1968), a journalist whom Conrad had met in 1912, had been instrumental in tracking down Conrad’s scattered writings for Notes on Life and Letters,3 and was the logical person in the writer’s circle to deal with his literary remains, also seeing into print Suspense (1925), a novel left unfinished on Conrad’s death.4 Curle’s energies extended to abridging ‘The Congo Diary’, but he omitted the ‘Up-river Book’, the second of Conrad’s surviving documents from the Congo.5 Despite its title and apparent completeness, the collection neither is exhaustive nor gathers every piece of writing by Conrad then uncollected. Curle’s task in assembling the material was formidable, because preliminary discussions with Conrad about an additional volume similar to Notes on Life and Letters were general at best. Curle recalls Conrad’s wish to publish a ‘pendent volume’ to The Mirror of the Sea that would include ‘Legends’, ‘The Torrens’, ‘Christmas-day at Sea’, ‘Ocean Travel’, ‘Outside Literature’ and,

4 The task of collecting his letters fell to Jean Aubry (who wrote under the pen name G. Jean-Aubry), a French friend also engaged in overseeing the translation of Conrad’s work into French, a project he had taken over from André Gide.
so Curle says, part of ‘Geography and Some Explorers’. That volume would have emphasized the men Conrad had sailed with rather than the sea itself, extending his desire to be remembered as more than simply a spinner of sea-tales, a concern expressed as late as the spring of 1924 in his ‘Preface’ to The Shorter Tales of Joseph Conrad: ‘As a matter of fact I have written of the sea very little if the pages were counted. It has been the scene but very seldom the aim of my endeavour... I aimed at an element as restless, as dangerous, as changeable as the sea, and even more vast— the unappeasable ocean of human life’ (109.26–32). Seventeen months before his death, he requested that his agent obtain permission from the owner of the copyright of ‘Stephen Crane’ to include it in ‘a posthumous vol: of coll[ect]ed pieces’, a “suite” to the Personal Record, which I have had long in my mind. Conrad thus anticipated that a final volume of reminiscences, memoirs and essays would complement The Mirror of the Sea and A Personal Record. The volume that emerged, however, is much closer to Notes on Life and Letters in both subject matter and form.

Curle acknowledged, in his Introduction to the volume he edited as well as in a letter to Conrad’s literary agent, Eric S. Pinker, that ‘additional matter’ might be collected for a later printing of Last Essays because it did not, in fact, include all of Conrad’s uncollected writings. Curle chose not to print everything ‘to avoid any aspect of absolute completeness, as though a dead author’s desk had been ransacked for every fragment’, and asserted that ‘Nothing has been printed merely for the purpose of adding to the bulk’ (362). Most of the essays chosen were selected from his personal library; those not readily available to him, such as the text of the ‘Memorandum’ written for Lawrence Holt, he ferreted out. Despite his efforts, at least one piece seems to have been overlooked. Had Curle known of – or remembered – ‘The Silence of the Sea’, published in the Daily Mail on 18 September 1909, he would almost certainly have included it. The essay refers to ‘Overdue and Missing’ (collected in The Mirror of the Sea), and complements other writings that demonstrate Conrad’s interest in lost and missing ships, such as those on the Titanic disaster (collected in Notes on Life and Letters), and it discusses disasters at sea as do ‘The

1 Curle’s ‘Introduction’ (Appendix A).
2 Conrad to Eric S. Pinker, 21 March 1923 (Letters, viii, 58–9).
3 Richard Curle to Pinker, 15 June 1926 (Berg).
4 Note on the fly-leaf of George T. Keating’s copy of Last Essays (Yale).
INTRODUCTION

Loss of the Dalgonar and the Memorandum. Curle also omitted the Foreword to Alec John Dawson’s Britain’s Life-boats (1923) which, like The Dover Patrol and The Unlighted Coast, commemorates the war-time service of seamen in the English Channel and North Sea. Other omitted items show the diversity of Conrad’s interests and bear witness to friendships: the Foreword to Alice S. Kinkead’s Landscapes of Corsica and Ireland (1921), and the Introductory Note to A Hugh Walpole Anthology (1921). Finally, Curle omitted the Author’s Note to Youth and Gaspar Ruiz (1920), which complements Conrad’s prefaces to his collected edition.¹

WRITING TO THE MARKET

Conrad’s occasional essays were well suited to a reading public that by the latter part of the nineteenth century had both expanded and become increasingly diverse.² Writers of fiction variously took advantage of this shift, diversifying their output to suit demand. Once he had established himself as an author with Almayer’s Folly and An Outcast of the Islands, and with his contacts in literary London made, Conrad could count on literary journalism to increase his income. He none the less expressed an ambivalent attitude to writing articles for serial publication, remarking to his friend Edward Sanderson in 1898 that the degradation of daily journalism has been spared to me so far (Letters, ii, 34).³ Despite such disdain, Conrad was not reluctant to turn out occasional prose, although he did so mainly when commissioned, and, by his late career, as a recourse for meeting immediate financial needs. For example, in 1918 he wrote three

¹ In 1978, CDP brought these pieces together, with a more comprehensive transcription of The Congo Diary than Curle’s and a transcription of Up-river Book and various additional essays. Critical texts of the essays mentioned are offered in the present volume, following Up-river Book.
articles on the British Merchant Service to pay for his wife’s hospital bills,¹ and, before travelling to America in the spring of 1923, he proposed writing three pieces to pay for his travel expenses.²

Conrad routinely complained to his literary agent about his financial situation, but considering that the average annual income for an English family in 1924 was £210,³ he was well paid for essays published in newspapers and periodicals; he received £400 for ‘Stephen Crane’, £50 for ‘Ocean Travel’, £60 for ‘Christmas-day at Sea’ and another $500 for its reprinting in America. By 1916 he was financially secure, earning more than £10,000 in a single year.⁴ His income from writing allowed him to live quite comfortably, and The Times reported the value of his estate on his death at £20,045.⁵ Realizing that the end of his productive life was approaching, Conrad worked under increasing, if self-imposed, pressure from about 1920 onwards to complete The Rover and Suspense, to guide Mrs Conrad’s A Handbook of Cookery for a Small House through press and to write the preface and organize the contents of The Shorter Tales.⁶

The occasional pieces he wrote after the publication of Notes on Life and Letters were mainly by request – a pattern long established – or in response to events reported in the press. The origins are quite varied. Thomas Beer, an American journalist and short-story writer, commissioned the introduction to his biography of Stephen Crane, and Heinemann accepted ‘His War-book’ for an edition of Crane’s Red Badge of Courage. Curle solicited ‘Travel’ as the introduction to Into the East; Conrad’s friend and owner of The Times, Lord Northcliffe, asked for ‘The Dover Patrol’; and the ship-builder Lawrence Durning Holt requested the ‘Memorandum’ for his scheme of establishing a training-ship. Curle encouraged Conrad to write reminiscences of his experience in the Torrens, and Curle’s friend, the publisher J. A. Hammerton, commissioned ‘Geography and Some Explorers’ for Countries of the World. David Bone, a friend, and captain of the Tuscania on which Conrad sailed to America, suggested that he write ‘Notices to Mariners’ (later ‘Outside Literature’). Finally, the Admiralty had

² Conrad to Eric S. Pinker, 9 April 1923 (Letters, viii, 74).
⁶ See ‘Chronology’ for publication details.