

CONRAD: A REASSESSMENT. By Douglas Hewitt. (Bowes and Bowes; 10s. 6d.)

Conrad's appeal has been attributed to the fact that all the world loves a sailor and it is not only the circulating library assistant who offers us a Conrad novel because it is a 'nice sea story'. Mr Hewitt removes the romantic nautical humbug. Conrad did not write about the sea either because he had any sentimental attachment to it or because it was the limit of his experience. The sea provided him with a satisfactory means of detaching and isolating his characters so that we could study the 'poor, bare, forked animal'. For such reasons Conrad may be classed among the great novelists who are interested in man as such. Mr Hewitt does not worry this thesis to death—and no doubt it is as well—but he does make it perfectly clear that Conrad is not interested merely in behaviour, nor is he simply a chronicler or character painter. He writes the psychological novel in the best sense because he studies not the 'goings on' of a detached human psyche but what it is that makes the thing human. Mr Hewitt however is no wild hero-worshipper: he discusses fully the weaknesses of Conrad's later work. He also makes valuable suggestions about the way in which Conrad may truly be called a tragic writer.

G.M.

NOTICES

A LIFE OF ONE'S OWN, by 'Joanna Field', had been unobtainable for too long, and it is good that it has now been reprinted as a two-shilling Pelican Book. It is the account of a bold and revealing, but unpretentious, 'voyage to the interior' by a sceptical, agnostic, scientifically-trained mind. Its discovery that 'only by being prepared to accept annihilation can one escape from that spiritual "abiding alone" which is in fact the truly death-like state' is hardly new to those acquainted with the annals of religion. Similarly, 'this discovery of the need for a male-female rhythm in my thought' is ancient wisdom, reformulated in our own day in many a psychological textbook. But 'Joanna Field' truly *discovers* these things afresh, and much else on the way, and shows how a fairly typical—but unusually honest, humble and courageous—modern mind can and did recover them again experimentally. A book to be recommended to those who are sceptical of the documents alike of religion and psychology, and one which has much to instruct and provoke more faithful adepts of both.

There is little in THE BEGINNING AND THE END, by Nicolas Berdyaev (Bles; 25s.), which is not to be found in his previous books, and there was little of importance in them that will not be found at least *en*