

Epstein: An Autobiography
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Art Treasures Book Club.

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selves upon the artist. This can never result in a successful work—one that renders the character of the model. Sir Hugh Walpole was one of these sitters. He insisted in sitting to me like a Pharaoh, with head held high and chin stuck out. In reality, Sir Hugh was the most genial of men with sparkling, twinkling, humour in his eye, and his mouth wreathed in a kindly and genial smile. But with the rigidity of Sir Hugh's pose I could do nothing. I knew that the head was well modelled, but as for a portrait of my model's real self, I never thought it was that for a moment. It was Sir Hugh Walpole in the rôle of Benito Mussolini.

JOSEPH CONRAD

Muirhead Bone had arranged that I should do a bust of Conrad for him. I had desired, ten years before, to work from him and had spoken to Richard Curle about it, but had been informed by him that Conrad could not sit for me owing to the intervention of a painter "friend". At the time I was deeply disappointed and dropped the idea, but in 1924 the commission was finally arranged. My admiration for Conrad was immense, and he had a head that appealed to a sculptor, massive and fine at the same time, so I jumped at the idea of working from him at last. After a meeting in London it was arranged with him that I should go down to his place at Oswalds, near Canterbury, and—at my suggestion—should live in an inn in a nearby village while working on the bust. This arrangement always suits me best, as I prefer to be free outside my working hours.

I set out from London on a cold March morning, feeling somewhat ill and down-hearted. I hated working away from my studio, amidst uncertain and perhaps disagreeable conditions. Before beginning a work I am timid and apprehensive. What will the lighting be? A good start is everything, and with a subject like Conrad I wanted to do justice to myself. My taxi contained my working materials, stands, clay, and working tools. It seemed a long journey to Kent, I arrived towards dark with snow falling. Conrad met me and we arranged the room in which I should work, where I unpacked my baggage. I was then conducted across a park to the village of Bridge and the inn where I was to stay. This inn seemed to be of the gloomiest and coldest type. The whole mood of the place, with the sodden country-side, promised a cheerless beginning.

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We usually had tea in his small, cosy study. On one occasion, as there was company, I recall having tea in a large, grand, shuttered room with French furniture very conventionally arranged. Conrad was strongly feudal in his ideas and when I complained of the servile attitude of the villagers round about, he said that they were happier so. My reference to the villagers was occasioned by an incident which happened at Bridge. I had remarked on the astonishing velocity of a racing-car which had driven through the village at race-track speed scattering children and chickens. At the local barber's I mentioned this, and ventured to remark that the children were in danger of their lives. The barber said that in fact several children had been killed, but that the racing magnate had paid the parents handsomely, and all the villagers looked to him for employment. The report that Conrad refused a knighthood because it was offered by a Socialist Government, would, if true, bear out my observation about his feudal cast of mind.

I looked at Conrad's bookshelf. He had not many books. In no sense a library. A complete edition of Turgenev in English. We talked of books and, expecting him to be interested in Melville's *Moby Dick*, I mentioned it, and Conrad burst into a furious denunciation of it. "He knows nothing of the sea. Fantastic, ridiculous," he said. When I mentioned that the work was symbolical and mystical: "Mystical my eye! My old boots are mystical." "Meredith? His characters are ten feet high." D. H. Lawrence had started well, but had gone wrong. "Filth. Nothing but obscenities." For Henry James he had unqualified admiration. Of his own novels he said it was a toss up at one time as to whether he would write in English or French. He emphasised the amount of labour he gave to a novel to get it to satisfy himself.

At a few of the sittings Conrad dictated letters to the secretary. His English was strongly foreign with a very guttural accent, so that his secretary frequently failed to get the right word, which made Conrad growl. I would try to detach myself from the work to listen. His composition was beautiful. Sentence followed sentence in classic "Conrad", totally unlike his conversational manner, which was free, easy, and colloquial.

The work on the bust was nearing completion. One day at the end of the sittings, Mrs. Conrad appeared at the door to see it. She

gave one glance and fled the artist sees. The fact, haps a really mediocre spect. When George Be why he had given sitt claimed: "Why, he is a the room where the por

Conrad's own opinior in a letter he wrote to executor. "The bust of marvellously effective pi than a masterly interpre to posterity like that." I the National Portrait G

At last the bust was c carry it away to London and travelled with the b and read that Joseph C

In 1933 rumours of tl his flight to England. He mander Locker-Lampsc some correspondence wi working from Einstein, travelled to Cromer, an the camp situated in a s

Einstein appeared dre wild hair floating in th the humane, the humor tion which delighted me

The sittings took pla piano, and I could hard whom there were sever remove the door, which I would like the roof off but I did not demand it.