

The Saturday Review

of LITERATURE

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THE OLD SELF AND THE YOUNG SELF: ARNOLD BENNETT
 OLD SELF: "All gone according to plan, you see."
 YOUNG SELF: "My plan, you know."
 (From Max Beerbohm's "Observations," Doubleday, Doran)

Rooted in Confusion

THERE have always been a considerable number of persons who have believed that poverty is an incentive to the flowering of talent, and that suffering of itself produces that catalysis of soul which dissolves the extraneous and leaves genius pure of restraint. Heaven knows that this being so, we should have talent and genius in plenty today. But where are they to be found? Where are the poets, the novelists, the mute inglorious Miltons whose latent abilities have been galvanized into excellence by privation and pain of spirit? Not on the lists of the publishers certainly; hardly, we believe, in their files awaiting the dawn of a better financial day. No, we fear that genius has not been a-burgeoning in these years of depression, and that even talent has not come to bud.

Perhaps in the nature of things it must be so. For the poor old world has got itself to so sorry a pass that suffering has become not a thing of the individual but of the masses. Like another war, the depression is a blight upon us, bewildering in its persistence, shattering in its severity. Men's minds are turned to the immediate and the practical, their thoughts engulfed by the plight of society. Naturally the artist shares in the predicament of his fellows. Like them he is hurt in purse, in confidence, in courage. And being, unlike many of them, articulate, he translates his feelings into literature or art, and his literature and art reflecting his mood, take on a discontented and propagandist tinge. He no longer remains a portrayer of society, but he is become a crusader against social ills, a propounder of social panaceas. He paints a Lenin on the walls of a pleasure palace, writes his tale about a Detroit in the grip of unemployment.

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Bridges to the Unknown

THE INDUSTRIAL DISCIPLINE AND THE GOVERNMENTAL ARTS. By REXFORD G. TUGWELL. New York: Columbia University Press. 1933. \$2.50.

Reviewed by GEORGE SOULE

DENUNCIATIONS of "the economists" in recent years have been second in frequency only to denunciations of the bankers. During the Harding-Coolidge decade the economists were often described as dangerous radicals, impractical theorists, who supported such things as low tariffs, cancellation of war debts, and even, occasionally, terrible menaces like labor organization, collective bargaining, unemployment insurance, or minimum-wage legislation. With the onslaught of depression, the economists were attacked because many of them had failed to foresee it and warn against it—especially the variety who were caught up in the bull market and hired for business purposes. Then came the onslaught on the economists because, forsooth, the economic world itself was behaving so badly—as if practical men had been in the habit of following economists' instructions and as if our institutions had been devised by theorists.

The statement attributed to Bernard Shaw, however, that "If all the economists were laid end to end, they would not reach a conclusion," comes the nearest to being just. There is almost no unanimity among them, and little substantial agreement. The trouble is, not that they have been running affairs badly, but that they have not been running affairs at all. And, by and large, they have not been fitting themselves to do so. You have expert dialecticians, spinning special theories within the framework of a highly intellectualized classical theory; you have experts

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Living in the Grand Hotel*

By W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM

I FIRST knew Arnold Bennett in 1904 when we were both living in Paris. I had taken a very small flat near the Lion de Belfort, on the fifth floor, from which I had a spacious view of the cemetery of Montparnasse; I used to lunch in and dine at the *Chat Blanc* in the rue d'Odessa. A number of painters, sculptors, and writers were in the habit of dining there and we had a little room to ourselves. We got a very good dinner, *vin compris*, for two francs fifty, and it was usual to give four sous to Marie, the good-humored and sharp-tongued maid who waited on us. We were of all nationalities and the conversation was carried on indifferently in English and French. Sometimes a painter would bring his mistress and her mother, whom he introduced politely to the company as *ma belle mère*, but for the most part we were men only. We discussed every subject under the sun, generally with heat, and by the time we came to coffee (with which I seem to remember a *fine* was thrown in) and lit our cigars, *demi londrès* at three sous apiece, the air was heady. We differed with extreme acrimony. Arnold used to come there once a week. He was older than most of us. He was then a thin man, with dark hair very smoothly done in a fashion that suggested the private soldier of the day. He was much more neatly dressed than the rest of us and more conventionally. He looked like a managing clerk in a city office. At that time the only book he had written that we knew of was "The Grand Babylon Hotel" and our attitude towards him was somewhat patronizing. We were very highbrow. Some of us had read the book and enjoyed it, which was enough for us to decide that there was nothing in it, but the rest shrugged their shoulders, though with good nature, and declined to waste their time over such trash. Had you read Bubu de Montparnasse? That was the stuff to give the troops.

Arnold lived in Montmartre, I think in the rue des Dames, and he had a small dark apartment filled with Empire furniture. He was exceedingly proud of it. It was very tidy. Everything was in its place. It was not very comfortable and you could not imagine anyone making himself at home in it. It gave you the impression of a man who saw himself in a certain role, which he was playing carefully, but into the skin of which he had not quite got. As everyone knows Arnold had then given up the editing of a magazine called *Woman* and had settled in Paris to train himself for the profession of literature. He was reading Stendhal and Flaubert, but chiefly Balzac, and I think he told me that in a year he had read through the whole of the "Comédie Humaine." He was just beginning on the Russians and talked with enthusiasm of "Anna Karenina." He thought it at that time the greatest novel ever written. I am under the impression that he did not discover Chekov till much later. When he did he began to admire Tolstoy less. Like everyone else who lives in Paris he had come across a particular little restaurant where you

could get a better meal for less money than anywhere else. This one was on the first floor, somewhere in Montmartre, and now and then I used to go over to dine, Dutch Treat, with him. After dinner we went back to his apartment and he would play Beethoven on a cottage piano. Through Marcel Schwob he had got to know a good many of the French writers of the day and I seem to remember his telling me that Schwob had taken him to Mallarmé who was then the high priest of French letters. Arnold's plan of campaign was cut and dried. He proposed to make his annual income by writing novels, and by writing plays to make provision for his old age. Because I had lately had my first play produced he gave me one of his to read. I criticized it with vigor. He had made up his mind to write two or three books to get his hand in and then write a masterpiece. I listened to him, but attached no importance to what he said. I did not think him capable of writing anything of consequence. When I asked him what sort of book his masterpiece was going to be, he said something on the lines of "A Great Man"; but this, he added, had brought him in nothing at all and he couldn't afford to go on in that style till he was properly established.

Arnold was good company and I always enjoyed spending an evening with him, but I did not much like him. He was very cocksure and bumptious, and he was rather common. I do not say this of him depreciatingly, but as I might say of someone else that he was short or fat. I left Paris and it was many years before I saw much of him again.

The Stage Society produced a play of his which I liked. I wrote and told him so, and he wrote a letter to me, thanking me, in which he laid out the critics who had not thought so well of the play as I did. He wrote one or two books which I did not read. At last I came across "The Old Wives' Tale." I was astounded to discover that it was a great book. I was thrilled. I was enchanted. I was deeply impressed. I had never suspected that Arnold was capable of writing anything of the sort. It

This Week

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GRAND CANARY

By A. J. CRONIN

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NOTES WITH A YELLOW PEN: IV

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Next Week, or Later

FRANK NORRIS

By Ernest Peixotto

* The following article constitutes with a slight excision the introduction to Bennett's "Old Wives' Tale," included in "Travellers' Book," to be issued next week by Doubleday, Doran & Co.

would be impertinent of me to say anything in praise of it. I have read many appreciations of it, and I think everything has been said but one thing, and that is that it is eminently readable. I should not mention a merit that is so obvious except that many great books do not possess it. It is the greatest gift of the story-teller and one that Arnold Bennett had even in his slightest and most trivial pieces. The success of "The Old Wives' Tale" came slowly. I think I am right in saying that it was reviewed favorably, but not with frantic eulogies, and that its circulation was moderate. For a time it looked as though it would have no more than a *succès d'estime* and be forgotten as all but one novel out of a thousand are forgotten. By a happy chance which would take too long to narrate "The Old Wives' Tale" was brought to the attention of Mr. George Doran who had bought sheets of it; he forthwith acquired the American rights, set it up, and launched it on its triumphant course. It was not till after its great success in America that it was taken over by another publisher in England and attracted the attention of the British public.

For many years, what with one thing and another, I do not think I met Arnold, or if I did it was only at a party, literary or otherwise, at which I had the opportunity to say no more than a few words to him; but after the war and until his death I saw much of him. Much has been written of him during these later years and I have little to add. He was become a great figure. He was very different from the thin, rather insignificant man, looking like a city clerk, with his black hair plastered down on his head, that I had known in Paris. He had grown stout. His hair, very gray, was worn much longer and he had cultivated the amusing cock's comb that the caricaturists made famous. He had always been neat in his dress, disconcertingly even, but now he was grand. He wore frilled shirts in the evening and took an immense pride in his white waistcoats. He had related the story of a picnic I took him on while he was staying with me in the South of France when, a storm preventing us from leaving the island on which we were, he took stock with his humorous detachment of the reactions of the various persons present to the slight danger we found ourselves faced with. He did not say that the women were all in pyjamas and the men in tennis shirts, duck trousers, and *espadrilles*; but that he, refusing to permit himself such *sans gêne*, was arrayed in a check suit of a sort of mustard color, wore fancy socks and fancy shoes, a starched collar, a striped shirt, and a foulard tie; and that when at six next morning we all got home, bedraggled, unshaven, and looking like nothing on earth, he, in his smart shirt and neat suit, looked, as he had looked eighteen hours before, as though he had just come out of a band-box. To the end of the experience he remained dignified, self-possessed, good-tempered, and interested.

But it was not only in appearance that he was a very different man from the one that I had known in Paris. I dare say it was all there then and perhaps it was only my stupidity and youth that prevented me from seeing it. Perhaps also it was that life had changed him. I think it possible that at first he was hampered by his extreme diffidence, and his bumptiousness was a protection he assumed to his own timidity and that success had given him confidence. It had certainly mellowed him. He had acquired a very sensible assurance of his own merit. He told me once that there were only two novels written during the last thirty years that he was confident would survive and one of these was "The Old Wives' Tale." It was impossible to know him without liking him. He was a character. His very oddities were endearing. Indeed it was to them that the great affection in which he was universally held was partly due, for people laughed at foibles in him which they were conscious of not possessing themselves and thus mitigated the oppression which admiration for his talent must otherwise have made them feel. He was never what in England is technically known as a gentleman, but he was not common any

more than the traffic surging up Ludgate Hill is common. His common sense was matchless. He was entirely devoid of envy. He was generous. He was courageous. He always said with perfect frankness what he thought and because it never struck him that he could offend he never did; but if, with his quick sensitiveness, he imagined that he had hurt somebody's feelings he did everything in reason to salve the wound. His kindness glowed like a halo about a saint.

I was surprised to see how patronizing on the whole were the obituary notices written at his death. A certain amount of fun was made of his obsession with grandeur and luxury, and the pleasure he took in *trains de luxe* and first class hotels.



SOMERSET MAUGHAM

He never quite grew accustomed to the appurtenances of wealth. Once he said to me, If you've ever really been poor you remain poor at heart all your life. I've often walked, he added, when I could very well afford to take a taxi because I simply couldn't bring myself to waste the shilling it would cost. He admired and disapproved of extravagance.

The criticism to which he devoted much time during his later years came in for a good deal of adverse comment. He loved his position on *The Evening Standard*. He liked the power it gave him and enjoyed the interest his articles aroused. The immediate response, like the applause an actor receives after an effective scene, gratified his appetite for actuality. It gave him the illusion, peculiarly pleasant to the author whose avocation necessarily entails a sense of apartness, that he was in the midst of things. He read as a man of letters and whatever he thought he said without fear or favor. He had no patience with the precious, the affected, or the pompous. If he thought little of certain writers who are now more praised than read it is not certain that he thought wrong. He was more interested in life than in art. In criticism he was an amateur. The professional critic is probably somewhat shy of life, for otherwise it is unlikely that he would devote himself to the reading and judging of books rather than to stress and turmoil of living. He is more at ease with it when the sweat has dried and the acrid odor of humanity has ceased to offend the nostrils. He can be sympathetic enough to the realism of De-foe and the tumultuous vitality of Balzac, but when it comes to the productions of his own day he feels more comfortable with works in which a deliberately literary attitude has softened the asperities of reality. That is why, I suppose, the praise that was accorded to Arnold Bennett for "The Old Wives' Tale" after his

death was cooler than one would have expected.

Some of the critics said that notwithstanding everything he had a sense of beauty and they quoted passages to show his poetic power and his feeling for the mystery of existence. I do not see the point of making out that he had something of what you would like him to have had a great deal more of and ignoring that in which his power and value was. He was neither a mystic nor poet. He was interested in material things and in the passions common to all men. He described life, as every writer does, in the terms of his own temperament. He was more concerned with the man in the street than with the exceptional person. Everyone knows that Arnold was afflicted with a very bad stammer; it was painful to watch the struggle he had sometimes to get the words out. It was torture to him. Few realized the exhaustion it caused him to speak. What to most men was as easy as breathing, to him was a constant strain. It tore his nerves to pieces. Few knew the humiliation it exposed him to, the ridicule it excited in many, the impatience it aroused, the awkwardness of feeling that it made people find him tiresome; and the minor exasperation of thinking of a good, amusing, or apt remark and not venturing to say it in case the stammer ruined it. Few knew the distressing sense it gave rise to of a bar to complete contact with other men. It may be that except for the stammer which forced him to introspection Arnold would never have become a writer. But I think it is not the least proof of his strong and sane character that notwithstanding this impediment he was able to retain his splendid balance.

"The Old Wives' Tale" is certainly the best book he wrote. He never lost the desire to write another as good and because it was written by an effort of will he thought he could repeat it. He tried in "Clayhanger," and for a time it looked as though he might succeed. I think he failed only because his material fizzled out. After "The Old Wives' Tale" he had not enough left to complete the vast structure he had designed. No writer can get more than a certain amount of ore out of one seam; when he has got that, though it remains, miraculously, as rich as before, it is only others who can profitably work it. He tried again in "Lord Raingo" and he tried for the last time in "Imperial Palace." Here I think the subject was at fault. Because it profoundly interested him he thought it was of universal interest. He gathered his data systematically, but they were jotted down in notebooks and not garnered (as were those of "The Old Wives' Tale") unconsciously and preserved, not in black and white, but as old memories in his bones, in his nerves, in his heart. But that Arnold should have spent the last of his energy and determination in the description of a hotel seems to me to have a symbolical significance. For I feel that he was never quite at home in the world. It was to him perhaps a sumptuous hotel, with marble bathrooms and a marvellous cuisine, in which he was a transient guest. For all his assurance and his knowing air I felt that he was, here among men, impressed, delighted, but a little afraid of doing the wrong thing and never entirely at his ease. Just as his little apartment in the rue des Dames years before had suggested to me a role played carefully, but from the outside, I feel that to him life was a role that he played, and with ability, but into the skin of which he never quite got.

Although Your Thought

By JANET PIPER

ALTHOUGH your thought lies in my open hand,
Transparent, plain, for all the world to see,
Being not you, and lacking the true key,
Still I may never wholly understand.

"I am the corn, you are the chickadee
Picking me up. And will you eat me, mother?"
Here is a simple game like any other,
And in it mind's implicit mystery.
Time is my enemy, I am aware,
And there are subtler foes lurk in his train.
This is my certain best, this now and here;
So I am prey to sharp and sudden fear,
So I am stabbed with immemorial pain,
Kin to all mothers, lovers, anywhere.

Bridges to the Unknown

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in statistical research, amassing mountains of facts within the framework of no consistent theory at all; you have brilliant improvisers and critics like John Maynard Keynes, with special hobbies; you have students of institutions and students of economic history—many of them able in their lines, but producing very little net result. What has been most lacking recently is the economic philosopher, the political economist in the old sense, who is able to take statistical facts, theories, knowledge of institutions, and an understanding of all the relevant social sciences, and, with a judicious mixture of intuition, weld them into a consistent view of affairs which is somehow applicable to the current situation, somehow capable of being tested by experience.

Mr. Tugwell is one of those who have been hammering away at this larger construction, and he also happens to be at present in a position to exert some influence over action. His book is full neither of facts nor of examples nor of intricate special theories, but of penetrating observations in the generalized, conceptual language of the philosopher. Almost at the beginning of his essay he recognizes that "we conspicuously lack the mental qualities necessary for looking facts in the face," and that "the reforms we need most are of these sorts which lie in our thinking and our loving." The scholars "are dominated by a conceptual analysis which stands in contrast to the instru-

REXFORD GUY TUGWELL
Courtesy of Harris and Ewing

mental projection we need." They attempt to derive causal relations from the past.

We think we cannot see ahead until the exploration of causes is complete. We therefore cannot act. For causes require a long time to appear. . . . The liberty of scholarship is limited by conventional method, not, as is sometimes suggested, by sinister pressures from the outside. It is because there is so little imaginative feeling for implication in the academic mind that it remains so relatively useless in the crises. . . .

What is needed is "to seize on probabilities in the future and advise action with relation to conditions they impose."

His own estimate of these probabilities and his advice for action comprise most of the book. They arise from the major premise that we are committed to machine technology. What are machines, fundamentally? They are devices for relieving men of work. It is a backhanded view to suppose that they must be condemned as causes of unemployment. We really want unemployment at irksome labor. What we require is interesting and pleasant occupation. When men are substituted for machines, the men suffer. The problem is to substitute machines for men as rapidly and extensively as possible, to let the machines furnish us with necessities of life more easily than we could do it ourselves, and to free our time for inventive, creative, flexible pursuits, for acts that we are better fitted to do than are machines.

Why do we not do this? Because we have not adapted our ideas to the inherent necessities of machine technology. If a man cannot get a living by having a job, we deprive him of income, and think he ought to be so deprived. But the fact that