



JOHN D. CRAIG: with a pup hair seal.

Tall Tales Ring True

DANGER IS MY BUSINESS. By John D. Craig. New York: Simon & Schuster. 1938. \$3.

THIS is a proper wow of an adventure story. John Craig, at thirty-four, has done more than most men dream to endanger his life excitingly. He has fought sharks with bubbles, lured tigers with human meat, dodged twenty-five foot manta rays which wanted to scratch the lice from their heads against his diving tubes, lived with savage Riffs in Africa, and resisted the advances of octopi. He is a tall-tale-spinner, but his tales ring true, and he is the first to marvel at them. As a boy of twenty he made sufficient money in oil to carry him around the world. Returning to America he became a deep-sea diver and photographer for the motion picture companies. This was his ideal work, beneath the sea in the unexplored, fantastic land that is four-fifths of the earth's surface. There he saw Japanese divers raking and harvesting their submarine sargasso plantations, he tickled quarter-ton jewfish beneath the chin and found they liked it, he often saw the grey smoke of blood.

But these adventures have by no means sufficed him. Among the many authenticated sunken treasures of the sea he hopes now to recover at least a few millions in gold. He will dive to the *Merida* this spring, to the *Lusitania* in the summer, using his own original diving suit and breathing a mixture of oxygen and helium to permit quick ascension without risk of the "bends." His book, colloquially and jocularly written, is packed solid with danger and the lore of his trade.

A Columbus of Time

AN EXPERIMENT WITH TIME. By J. W. Dunne. Fourth edition, revised. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1938. \$2.75.

Reviewed by J. B. PRIESTLEY

THIS is a new and revised edition of a book that has been out eleven years, but the most sensible thing to do here is to treat it as if it had just appeared for the first time. Why? Because to most American readers, the book has not appeared at all yet. They have never even heard of it, as I discovered for myself during a month's lecturing last year. If I had to name the most undeservedly neglected book in these States, it would be this of Dunne's. And perhaps I had better repeat here what I told so many thousands of listeners, that to my mind, of all the time theorists Dunne is at once the boldest, the most original, and the most convincing.

He calls his theory Serialism, because he believes that each of us is a series of Observers existing in a corresponding series of Times. In our ordinary daily life, we see the result of Observer One moving in Time One, though all the other Observers and Times are there. (It is a question of the focus of attention.) When we are asleep, our Observer One cannot function, and now Observer Two, who moves in Time Two, has a chance. Observer Two has a four-dimensional outlook, and so our stretch of Time One appears spatially to him. But being as yet inexperienced, Observer Two cannot focus his attention properly, and it flickers up and down the length of Time One. The queer result of these midnight four-dimensional antics is the dream, in which our ordinary waking self, our Observer One in Time One, may discover bits of both the Past and the Future. (That is, of course, Observer One's Past and Future, both of which are in Observer Two's Present.) And it is a fact, as he explains in this fascinating book, that Dunne was compelled to work out a new theory of time just because he discovered that in his dreams *he saw the future*. Now if this is a fact, then obviously our account of the universe must be so contrived that it will include this fact. You are not being scientific, even though some scientists seem to think so, if you ignore awkward facts.

Readers are at liberty to test the truth of this dream theory for themselves, though they must remember that it is not necessarily easy. (Dunne explains how to do it.) Whether his Serialism is true or false, I have no doubt whatever myself that in dreams we do actually catch glimpses of the future, and if I had space here I could give instances from my own and other persons' experiences. Furthermore, Dunne's theory seems to me the

only one that explains the curious telescoping of time and space effects in dreams, also explains that odd feeling we have sometimes of having been in a place before, to say nothing of that ancient conviction, as old as man himself, that there is something prophetic about dreams.

Dunne himself, who makes no mystical claims and is in fact a mathematician and engineer (he was one of the earliest aeroplane designers), does not base his theory on the dream effect, though his first approach was in that direction, but arrives at it by independent reasoning, designed to prove the regressive nature of time. Like all original thinkers, who cannot be put into a convenient pigeon-hole, he suffers somewhat from our contemporary specialization, for the philosophers think he ought to be dealt with by the scientists, and the scientists feel he ought to be refuted by the philosophers. Meanwhile, as the reception of his second and more difficult book, "The Serial Universe," plainly showed, he will either have to be refuted or accepted very soon. *Nature*, our leading scientific periodical in England, admitted in its review of him that his charge that physics is making use of two different times, is unanswerable. It is Dunne's view—and I do not know enough about science to say whether he is right or not—that the dilemmas and hesitations and bewilderments of the modern physicist are due to the fact that the conception of a single universal Time no longer holds good. Here, obviously, is a thinker who cannot be ignored.

The ordinary reader, whether in search of comfort or intellectual adventure, will be fascinated by Dunne's attempt to give a reasonable account and explanation of immortality. Dunne declares that both time and self-consciousness are regressive. Now in a regress, the first term is different from all the succeeding terms, which proceed in majestic likeness to infinity. Our ordinary life here—the experience of Observer One in Time One—represents the first term of the regress. It differs from the succeeding terms because both Observer One and his Time One must come to an end; the grave awaits us as surely as the cradle greeted us; but Observer Two, whose fragmentary adventures we know in dreams, is moving in another time, along a dimension of things at right angles to that which represents ordinary time to us and that we may call the Fourth Dimension. Observer Two does not disappear into the grave, but moves forward in Time Two, which presumably after death would appear to him as Time One does now to our ordinary waking selves. The fantastic character of dreams is due to the fact that Observer Two has not learned to focus his attention, and that, in remembering dreams, we are trying to reduce a four-dimensional

experience to three-dimensional terms. As immortal beings, we are "such stuff as dreams are made on."

One last point, to reply to the inevitable question about free will. Dunne holds, reasonably I think, that for Observer One his experiences along Time One are "determined," but that a higher Observer can intervene, within the limits of the fact that our various fields of action and attention are shared with our fellow beings. It has been obvious for a long time that the Free Will-Determinism argument had arrived at a stalemate because we did not really understand the nature of our lives. Dunne's contribution seems to me as reasonable as it is original. What he must not be asked for is a completely intelligible account of the whole vast and elaborate process. We might as well have asked Columbus for an ordinance survey of the whole New World.

Here then is a book that nobody with a grain of intellectual curiosity can afford to ignore. And do not be put off because the American publishers, in their unwisdom, have seen fit to give it a hideous format that looks like all the High School algebras I have ever seen.

J. B. Priestley's play, "*Time and the Conways*," recently on the New York stage and now published in book form, is based upon Dunne's theory of time.

Divided Family

ONE MINUS TWO. By Henri Troyat. New York: Ives Washburn. 1938. \$2.

A GALIC writer new to English and American readers is presented in this brief but telling study of family jealousy among the cabotins. In spite of poverty, the down-at-heel actor hero is happy because he possesses an adoring wife who assures him nightly that his performance in some trumpery farce has equalled Mounet-Sully at his best. But when the couple are precipitated into notoriety and comparative opulence as the parents of a child film star, the father finds himself resenting his son's early, untrained success. His wife's adoration is transferred to the child. As a result, though previously faithful, he feels impelled to run off on tour with a mistress, is miserable with her, and returns thankfully to Paris, only to discover that even with his son's precocious period of success already a thing of the past, the emotional balance cannot be restored. Father definitely hates son in the now divided family.

The narrative method in M. Troyat's book is straightforward and the treatment unaffected, tending towards a naturalistic appeal of the simpler sort. The characters are convincingly drawn, and there are many good details of life backstage and in the studios. With a little more irony this might have been a distinguished novel. As it is, however, the book is well planned and effective, if never of unusual subtlety or power.

Invitation to the Country

R. F. D. By Charles Allen Smart. New York: W. W. Norton & Co. 1938. \$2.50.

Reviewed by JONATHAN DANIELS

OAK HILL is not Walden Pond and Charles Allen Smart is not Henry David Thoreau, but I wonder if this stout, humorous, and moving book is not as important to this America as what Thoreau wrote was to that of his time and his writing. Mr. Smart has done a splendid thing. Only obviously has he written the richly detailed record of the return to the land of the educated, literary, urban American. His is no mere country book. Far more important than that, he has given us the story of growth beyond books and schoolrooms to understanding, to satisfaction, to a wise and creative fatalism on the American earth.

That land, undoubtedly, provides the details for the relation by Charles Allen Smart of the education of Charles Allen Smart. But I wondered, as I got from his pages the smell of manure and hay and working men, whether that educational process was wholly a matter of the closeness of all life to planting and birth, growing and dying, labor and fruit. I suspected that this educational process was already in motion in him when he was engaged in the unappealing task of teaching rich men's sons to become bogus English gentleman, long before he went with his Peggy to the house in which his people had lived on the land from which they took their living. Certainly the humility and high spirits which he took back to Ross County, Ohio, are as essential to this story as any of the rural events within it. He was already equipped for his cash crop of writing; his learning lit experience without stiffening him before new and strange attitudes and tasks. Not animal obstetrics, nor the vagaries of

weather or of hired men, nor any of the aspects of his country living seemed to me to be quite so important as the personality and the spirit which Charles Smart brought to them. I wondered even if, granted a Smart, such a development of the American might not also take place in the town, perhaps not in the great cities, sterilized by specialization, but in smaller American cities where life is still to be seen relatively whole.

Such seeing is the book's essence. Mr. Smart is a man who regards both the sky and the dirt and everything between and sees them free of preconception or dogmatism. That is a quality rare now, town or country; it is closer to the shrewd, unrestricted looking of older times than to the microscopic scrutiny of limited fields so common in our years and in our cities. We have learned to see so little well and much not at all. What Mr. Smart has done is not to discover the land, but to find the possibility of wholeness upon it.

I wish, without believing it, that "R. F. D." might be not merely one man's way but a lantern for the feet of others. So much has been written about young malcontents, such as Mr. Smart says he was, seeking escapes for themselves after John Reed and Nicolai Lenin and some others. By Mr. Smart's narrative such flights seem as irrelevant as alien. He has gone straight and safe, though not in ease, between pencil and sheepfold and between fancy farming and squalid grubbing to peaceful, even joyous, understanding of his place between the soil and the stars. I hope a best seller, such as this book already promises to be, will not disturb it but I wonder if a good price for his wool clip might not have better served serenity in Ross County. Fame, as is notorious, is strong drink for farmer—or philosopher. Fortunately Mr. Smart is both.



CHARLES ALLEN SMART AT OAK HILL, HIS OHIO FARM