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H. E. BATES on the New Books

"A.B." and Some Others

THOSE who remember "The Beadle" and "The Little Karoo" will turn eagerly to a new book, even of non-fiction, by Pauline Smith, whose brief essay on Arnold Bennett is her only published work since her stories of South African life.

Bennett was known to his friends as A.B., and in using those intimate initials as the title for her book Miss Smith gives a clear indication of what its tone and manner are to be. She calls it "a minor

"Believe me, the thing is fine! God knows whom I'll get . . . to publish it . . . but it's damn well got . . . to be published!"

From the very first she found writing painfully difficult. Every story had its agony. She lacked faith in herself, was often ill, and on her own confession often stupid. Yet Bennett persisted.

"My slowness, my long spells of illness or indolence or both, my despair and despondency, my failure, in spite of all his efforts, to learn the art of compassing an article or story within a given number of words—these things must have been trying to him, yet his faith in me persisted, and his patience, as master, never failed."

Her own faith in him has persisted also. "A.B.," as a personal note on Bennett, without any pretence of being a critical study or biography, is in every way admirable. Its tone and length are perfect.

In contrast, "The Early Life of D. H. Lawrence" is too short—only a little over 200 pages long, of which 50 pages are devoted to early stories and poems and another 80 to letters. The account of Lawrence's early life in the mining village of Eastwood in Nottinghamshire is so fascinating that its brevity is a great disappointment.

The letters to his sister Ada, his nephew and a friend form an interesting pendant to the recent Huxley volume, and the crude but lively manner of the early stories is curiously like that of his latest tales. The note on the place-names of his novels and the photographs of the scenes and farm-houses which occur again and again in his work will be a delight to all lovers of Lawrence.

There is a supercilious, super-intellectual quality about "Further Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine" that contrasts badly with the simplicity and genuine feeling of "The Early Life." Miss Moore seems to distrust clarity and simplicity. She lets off a series of brilliant and alarming intellectual fireworks which do no harm to those who needed attacking and which also fail to illuminate Lawrence for us.

Mr. E. F. Benson's "As We Are" is a successor to "As We Were." It deals caustically with "war-time, then post-war, post-tranquillity and—alas!—post-prosperity."

His most interesting chapter is that on modern authors, in which he writes with provocation on Lawrence and in which he lashes the Sunday-newspaper reviewers and the Book Society; his worst is that in which he attempts to deal with the political situation since 1920. It is interesting to compare his views of Bennett with those of Miss Pauline Smith.

Books in Short

A PITMAN AT OXFORD

AS one of the ornaments of the Oxford scene, I suppose (though appearing in this book anonymously and in the unattractive guise of an examiner), I have been asked to review "A Pitman Looks at Oxford" (Dent, 5s.). It is a little invidious. But not difficult. The very charm of Roger Dattler's book prevents that.

Those of us who know him from his other writings (not excluding that thesis on Cartwright, which I hope he will yet publish) will recognise his qualities as a writer: sensitiveness, a refined taste, a curious aloofness, a certain contemplativeness not unmingled with irony. Yet it is a gentle irony. Obviously he loves Oxford; as indeed who, except the foolish and the blind, do not?

Oxford—in these days so friendly to liberal causes, so tolerant, so generous: there can have been few men coming from the working-people more ready to appreciate what Oxford is and has to give; and none better fitted to render account of it.

For myself, how much I prefer this kind of book—a true book—giving the man's own feelings and impressions of what he sees and hears, to all the rubbishy novels that pour forth, with their second-rate authors' inventions, concerning third-rate people. It is a simple record of the reflections of a Yorkshire pitman, more than usually gifted and with a literary turn of mind, on the Oxford he came in contact with, simple, but none the less subtle for that. And as one who has followed a not very dissimilar course, I can say that is a fair account, and very characteristic. It is, in all senses, a grateful book, and deserves to become, in its way, a little classic. A. L. Rowse.

THOSE of us whose purses are limited will rejoice at the appearance of "Green Hell," by Julian Duguid (Cape, 5s.), in a cheap edition. It is an entrancing book, at times grim, but always breathlessly interesting in its account of an expedition through a tractless forest, with all the dangers attendant on such a journey. Several photographs of the expedition, and a map of the territory traversed, add to the interest of the book.

WE are often asked to suggest an introduction to the study of Economics. We can heartily recommend "An Outline of Economics," revised by W. T. Colyer and published by the N.C.L.C. Publishing Society, Ltd., 15, South Hill Park Gardens, N.W.3, at the price of 2s. 6d. (2s. 8d. post free) or cloth 3s. 6d. (3s. 9d. post free). Here is the Marxian approach in clear definition, together with the main points in the arguments of those who differ.

AT the same prices and from the same publishers comes J. F. Horrabin's "An Outline of Economic Geography," one of the most stimulating, and possibly the most popular, of the "Plebs" outlines. Mr. Horrabin has thoroughly revised his book, and it is now brought right up to date in the light of recent world happenings. Economic geography is made easy in this book. NEW CLARION readers should read it as a (pleasant) duty.

Books Reviewed

A.B. By Pauline Smith. (Cape. 3/6.)

EARLY LIFE OF D. H. LAWRENCE. By Ada Lawrence and Stuart Gelder. (Secker. 7/6.)

FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON THE DEATH OF A PORCUPINE. By Olive Moore. (Blue Moon Press. 21/-.)

AS WE ARE. By E. F. Benson. (Longmans. 15/-.)

marginal note," but perhaps "an affectionate and personal memory" would have been better, for her essay is full of personal reminiscences, deep affection, and some awe mingled with admiration of Bennett.

She has not attempted criticism of him either as an artist or a man. Nor has she abused the memory of her friendship with him by any sensationalism or hero-worship. Her essay is cool, quiet and a little melancholy.

She first met Bennett in Switzerland soon after the publication of "The Old Wives Tale" and she continued to be his friend through his greatest periods down to his triumph as the business author, his failure as an artist and his death.

In Switzerland, finding by chance from her mother that her daughter "wrote a little," Bennett at once set himself to be her guide and critic and he kept up an implacably severe but affectionate attitude to her work, forcing her to write when she lacked the faith to write and often tearing her work to pieces when she had written, until the very end. It seems as if we owe the existence of her stories to Bennett as much as to herself.

This recognition and admiration of her work is a great tribute to Bennett's taste and judgment. Quiet, tragic little stories of poor folk in South African settlements would hardly seem likely to appeal to the author of "Imperial Palace," still less to arouse him to an enthusiasm which made him shout for joy over her finest story, "The Pain":

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