

Today, having dropped from the balloon to earth, rubbed its shins and shaken itself back to a semi-conscious state, the country is gazing at its new surroundings with the ambition to adapt itself accordingly. Naturally enough, one hears more talk than ever before of dealing with all the problems that accompany world economic unrest, such as war, social conditions, and unemployment. In view of what has gone before, it follows just as logically that "the post-war generation" should be tagged with a brand-new illogical status. It is now the saving hope of society. People gush about eager youth, ready to throw all its enthusiastic energy, all its wisdom gathered from mistakes of its sires, into the struggle to set the world right. A group of college boys, inspired by the intellectual flush of the moment, declare they're not going to go to war, and the pacifist societies emit loud cheers. Some well-meaning girls from Smith or Wellesley or Vassar visit a few jails, maternity wards or insane asylums in connection with their Sociology Major, and various optimistic souls are sure to say that, with all this interest, conditions can't help changing.

Horse feathers—extra large size. For every pacifist in college there is a lad proud in his Sam Browne belt as he struts to R.O.T.C. practice; and at least two more brave youths who argue ruggedly: "If some one punches me in the nose, do you mean to say I won't hit him back?" And for every embryonic feminine sociologist, there is a girl who buries herself in Shakespeare, Swiss Government, or Comparative Anatomy, so that, hearing of a leprosy epidemic in a tenement house district, her reaction will be a few sympathetic clucks and a change of subject. As for the unbelievably large group of collegians who care particularly about nothing at all, we gladly take leave of the subject. The comparative alertness of European and American students has been commented upon sufficiently in the past.

There are probably young people in our midst today who will lend powerful arms to worth-while movements. Perhaps there are more of these than there ever were before. But calmly to talk about "the post-war generation" *in toto* as the New Messiah is to build castles in the air. Some day, all may be like the few who show cause for such hopes; but now they live, for the most part, to assure themselves of having "the happiest years of their life."

This insistence to label us with fads in keeping with the whimsy of the moment is beyond me. We youngsters constitute just as heterogeneous a world as any other. So, if "post-war generation" is used for anything other than a vague chronological category, thumb your nose, tongue your cheek, eye your neighbor—but don't believe what you hear.

BOYD DIGESTS THE BOOKS

"THE Smart Set Anthology." (Burton Rascoe and Groff Conklin.) New York: Reynal and Hitchcock. \$3.50—A proof that it is possible to bring out an interesting magazine without recourse to dialectical materialism is furnished for the edification of the present lost literary generation by the editors of this anthology. They have taken the *Smart Set* from the beginning of its career under Wright down to the end of the editorship of Mencken and Nathan, and selected over a hundred contributions by the heretics of that time, the writers who frightened all the other American magazine editors. To call the roll of these names is to realize that a great blight has fallen over American literature today and that the American literary Renaissance is over. Burton Rascoe writes an excellent, informative history of the *Smart Set* by way of an introduction, which should take its place as an illuminating chapter in contemporary American literary history. It throws a sad light on the inexplicable twists and quirks of human destiny.

"The Georgian Scene." (Frank Swinnerton.) New York: Farrar & Rinehart. \$3.50—Mr. Swinnerton's "literary panorama" covers approximately the same period as the previous volume and presents for England a spectacle somewhat analogous. From his comment and criticism and his dexterous narrative the reader derives an impression of a great flowering of talent, of a twenty-five year period of intense

intellectual activity, which has no equivalent today. There appears to be a tendency on the part of those who had no first-hand knowledge of the time to describe these writers as "bankrupt," apparently because Marx was not their obsession. But there is not a panacea, from Marxianism to Distributivism, which was not advocated by some group or other of Mr. Swinnerton's Georgians. If the latter were bankrupt, then their successors have set up shop with a vast amount of bankrupt stock.

"Author Hunting." (Grant Richards.) New York: Coward-McCann. \$3.50—Here is still another work to exasperate the dialectical materialists. The ever genial Grant Richards tells the story of his first ventures as a publisher, just at the turn of the century, when he had the acumen to persuade Bernard Shaw to collect his plays for the first time into the two volumes known as "Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant." The correspondence concerning this and other early Shaviana is vastly amusing and shows the eternal G. B. S. in the strange light of an expert printer, binder, and accountant. The story of Dreiser's "A Traveller at Forty" is also related from the publisher's, as distinct from the author's, point of view. But for Richards, his recalcitrant author would have perished on the *Titanic*. In this volume, as in Swinnerton's, one catches again glimpses of a world of gay adventure, of intellectual disinterestedness, of brave experiment. Shaw contends that Grant Richards fell in love with literature, a fatal proceeding for a publisher but, as he turns over the brilliant list of his authors and recalls the fun of it all, Richards evidently has no regrets, but smiles charmingly as he adjusts his monocle.

"Experiment in Autobiography." (H. G. Wells.) New York: The Macmillan Company. \$4.00—Even those who decided long since that Wells was dead should read this engaging story of one man's life. The author seems to be quite frank about himself and maintains a discreet silence only where complete candor would be necessary and would injure living persons. Wells presents a little problem, which he naturally cannot solve. A man of great talent and extraordinary industry and vitality, his life may be said to have been consecrated to developing in himself and others their finest powers and ideals. Yet, he succeeded neither with marriage nor friendship, in the sense that no human tie ever seems to have bound him very closely. One closes the book with the feeling that he is an interesting but not very attractive personality, incurably naive in his endless enthusiasms, but impressed fundamentally only by success. An Arnold Bennett who envied the real Bennett's geniality and capacity for knowing his way about.

"Prelude to the Past." (R. G.) New York: William Morrow & Company. \$3.00—The heroine of the famous Ullstein affair, who prefers to be called by her maidenly initials, here essays to tell all, and her "frankness" has been duly cheered. Its quality may be judged by such wisdom as this: "In New York you are at home as soon as and as long as you have a job. In Paris you are at home as soon as and as long as you have a lover." Judging solely by the narrative as a whole, R. G. has spent most of her life living up to this theory, whether in Paris or not. The research unmagnificent, may I say, echoing Wells?

"Windfalls." (Sean O'Casey.) New York: The Macmillan Company. \$1.75—The stories, poems and plays here collected from the author's miscellanea will hardly send new readers to "Within the Gates" or "The Plough and the Stars," but admirers of those masterpieces cannot but read them with sympathy and interest. "Fall in a Gentle Wind," "The Star-Jazz" and "The Job" are the outstanding pieces, informed with those qualities which have made O'Casey's reputation. The two one-acters are perfect Abbey curtain-raisers.

"The Cingalese Prince." (Brooks Atkinson.) New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company. \$2.50—From Broadway first nights to a freighter, en route for Yokohama, Hongkong, Cebu, Macassar, Sourabaya, Singapore and other remote places, is a far cry. But Mr. Atkinson undertook the trip joyfully, enjoyed it all, and communicates much of his enjoyment and much of himself to the reader, as he recounts the adventures of his soul, if not amongst masterpieces, then amongst various unusual manifestations of God's handiwork—not the least of these being the British, whom this New Englander analyzes with bitter detachment. Despite the blurb, this is not a rehash of Maugham or Conrad, but a pungent, thoughtful record by an independent traveler.

"Why Not Try God?" (Mary Pickford.) New York: H. C. Kinsey & Company. \$1.00—After all the authoress has been through, there seems to be no alternative.

LIGHTS OUT FOR "PRETTY BOY" FLOYD

by HAROLD PREECE

NO particular glamour attaches to the reputations of the constables who dispatched "Pretty Boy" Floyd into Kingdom Come. Had the late Mr. Floyd been content to rest on his own laurels, instead of attempting to emulate Tom Mix by shooting up a sleepy Ohio village, the chances are that he would have eventually retired with age and a substantial amount of cash. But this lurid escapade, so startlingly different from the conduct of an ordinary yegg, proved the undoing of both Mr. Floyd and his able colleague, Mr. Adam Richetti. Even so, the constables were only able to pot the rash Oklahoman in the back as, already wounded, he scurried for safety across the open country.

Before the writers for the detective story penny-dreadfuls get in their dirty work, before the Sunday School quarterlies begin their horrendous moralizings about a character who was both a bandit and a gentleman, I would assume the rôle of devil's advocate. It is true that my acquaintance with the deceased was so slight as to be hardly worth mentioning. I was seated in a hamburger joint near my moldering domicile when Mr. Floyd and a pal dropped in to sate their hunger. The proprietor, recognizing the Sallisaw Dick Turpin, proceeded to fetch out the best in the larder for his distinguished patrons. I kept my seat and unobtrusively watched the pair masticate their steaks. Knowing Mr. Floyd's prejudice regarding publicity, I made no play for an interview. For once, I was glad that it was beyond the power of a bumptious City Editor to hand me assignments.

"Pretty Boy" Floyd was the last of the classic road agents. He was intrepid, daring; he robbed the rich and gave to the poor; he had a way with the women, particularly those who ordinarily exacted monetary compensation for the bequeathal of their charms. One found in his personality a certain verve which was lacking in his rival contemporaries. Contrast the dashing Mr. Floyd, for instance, with a blustering blackguard like Mr. John Dillinger or a wizened cut-throat like Mr. "Legs" Diamond. I go further in my elegy and assert that, by comparison, Mr. Al Capone and his associated banditti are so much alley-scum. Mr. Floyd perfected the art of thievery to an unprecedented magnitude; and the peccadilloes of a first-rate artist are always preferable to the rabbit-like decorum of mankind at large.

True, Mr. Floyd was obliged to make various concessions to modernity. His palfrey moved on wheels instead of hooves. The gentleman-outlaw affected Kuppenheimer breeks and Florsheim brogans rather than the traditional accoutrements of his profession. In a sense, Mr. Floyd's sartorial fastidiousness complimented the American ego. Is it not proverbial that one can always be clean and neat, whatever one's calling?

I can well imagine that Mr. Floyd found those long months of hiding in the Cookson hills to be monotonous. Out of sheer ennui, he finally burglarized his home-town bank. No great man can endure his boyhood environment, in spite of the "Home Sweet Home" falsehood concocted by that dormouse of American poets, Mr. John Howard Payne. The social life of the Cookson hills is somewhat narrowly restricted to unpleasant intimacy with gallused moonshiners and decaying Cherokee sagamores. I can testify from personal experience that the red-eye made "down on the crick" would afflict Bacchus himself with the D. T.'s. It is even worse than the stuff distilled in the neighboring Arkansas Ouachitas, which is saying a lot. Undoubtedly, the prospect of spending a winter in this houn'-dawg paradise must have irked Mr. Floyd's genius, hence that fatal sashay into Ohio.

Immediately, the Federal men began a renewed attempt to apprehend Pretty Boy for the Kansas City police massacre. Grave doubts

exist regarding the participation of Mr. Floyd in this protracted and somewhat gory adventure. But anyone who has resided within the precincts of Missouri knows that the Kansas City gendarmerie are the greasiest aggregation of nit-wits ever to masquerade in police uniforms. I have seen Kansas City cops beat pallid dope-heads from the North End into insensibility while permitting the offspring of the hog-packers to cavort through the streets at sixty miles an hour.

Pretty Boy died without benefit of parson or physician, a thoroughly unrepentant sinner who cursed his slayers to the last gasp. This doesn't mean that the Oklahoma bad man will get any sympathy from our more impassioned atheists. These militant blasphemers had their prejudices rubbed when Mr. Floyd's young son was inducted into the First Baptist Church, of Fort Worth, Texas. I think that our Ingersolls in knee-pants entirely missed the point. Dr. J. Frank Norris, pastor of the First Baptist Church, is a gun-totin' son-of-a-gun with some swell shooting to his credit. The baptism of young Jack Dempsey Floyd was a tribute from one strong man to another strong man, all the camouflage of ecclesiasticism aside. If the kid had to be saved, then, by God, his parents were going to have him saved by a sky-pilot quick on the draw!

The death of Pretty Boy marks the final eclipse of the frontier. In those hectic days before the advent of oil wells and barbed-wire fences, his deeds would have been compiled into a saga inspiring young desperadoes from San Antonio to Butte. Mexican sheepherders would have recounted his escapades on their mandolins after the flocks had been made secure from marauding wolves. Had he been captured, he would have been accorded the accolade of hanging from a mesquite tree instead of an ignominious death from behind.

Fame, so ephemeral nowadays, will not long adorn the memory of a man who, within his limits, possessed courage and integrity. One of MacFadden's hacks will be the richer for the bandit's untimely end; the city marshal of East Liverpool, Ohio, will bask in reflected and somewhat dubious glory. Presently, some awful imitator of Jimmie Rogers will compose a tuneless ballad entitled "The Death of Pretty Boy Floyd." It will be a sorry requiem for the last genuine outlaw of the West.

AIR

by GERRY ALLARD

Editor, *The Fighting Miner*

THE seventy-two-year-old Bear Creek mine whistle moans plaintively for the second time this morning, resounding monotonously in every nook and corner of regimented company shacks. It is 5:30 a. m. In iron-stead beds, working stiffers are aroused by the mine whistle—or the signal is relayed by the call of grouchy housewives who are already meddling around sooty cook stoves.

Shack number 17 is the home of Old Tim, known as Timothy P. Murphy to the company rent collector. With a grunt, several stretches, the aged miner lies with one eye half cocked over the sweaty covers. He steals away minutes that seem seconds; very confidentially he wishes the mine wasn't working today. Directly he hears the fat-back lively crackling on the stove, with final effort he stumbles from his bed, drags himself into pit clothes, slaps on his boots, gobbles his morning morsel, mechanically kisses the old woman and, presently, is on his way to the mine which lies three-quarters of a mile down the valley.

It's one hell of a day. The valley is enveloped in a thin but steady drizzle of moisture. It is mid-winter and the mornings are short of sunshine but long with pitch blackness. The slushing sound of boots in the black gumbo seems to keep time with the puffing wheezes of the steam boiler.

"No wonder the old woman is grouchy this morning," Old Tim thinks to himself. "Her rheumatism must be abotherin' her."

More boots are joining the intermingling paths leading to