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**Guide to the La Fayette Butler Collection of  
Arnold Bennett Publishing Correspondence and  
Manuscripts, 1903-1931**

Accession number: 1982-0024R  
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Contact Information:  
Pennsylvania State University  
University Libraries  
Special Collections Library  
104 Paterno Library  
University Park, PA 16802  
814/865-1793  
FAX 814/863-5318  
E-mail: [sks5@psulias.psu.edu](mailto:sks5@psulias.psu.edu)

Processed by: Jennifer Slivka and Susan Hamburger  
Date Completed: 2003  
Encoded by: Susan Hamburger

# Table of Contents

<b>1 Descriptive Summary .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 Administrative Information .....</b>	<b>1</b>
2.1 Access .....	1
2.2 Preferred Citation .....	1
<b>3 Arrangement .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>4 Separated Material .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>5 Biographical Note .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>6 Scope and Content .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>7 Index Terms .....</b>	<b>5</b>
7.1 Personal Name Subjects .....	6
7.2 Topical Subjects .....	6
7.3 Corporate Correspondents .....	6
7.4 Correspondents .....	6
7.5 Corporate Creators .....	6
7.6 Form/Genre Terms .....	7
<b>8 Container List .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>8.1 Correspondence Series .....</b>	<b>7</b>
8.1.1 Agent .....	7
8.1.2 Publishers .....	7
8.1.3 Authors .....	8
<b>8.2 Writings Series .....</b>	<b>8</b>
8.2.1 Bibliography .....	8
8.2.2 Catalogues .....	8
8.2.3 Film Scenarios .....	9
8.2.4 Novels .....	9

<b>8.2.5 Operatic Libretto .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>8.2.6 Plays .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>8.2.7 Reviews .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>8.2.8 Short Stories .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>8.3 Artwork Series .....</b>	<b>10</b>



## **Descriptive Summary**

**Creator:** Bennett, Arnold

**Title:** La Fayette Butler Collection of Arnold Bennett Publishing Correspondence and Manuscripts, 1903-1931

**Accession number:** 1982-0024R

**Provenance:** Gift of Charles T. Butler, 1982.

**Extent:** 6.06 cubic feet (7 boxes)

**Repository:** Pennsylvania State University, University Libraries, Special Collections Library

## **Administrative Information**

### **Access**

Unrestricted access.

### **Preferred Citation**

La Fayette Butler Collection of Arnold Bennett Publishing Correspondence and Manuscripts, 1903-1931, Accession 1982-0024R, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Special Collections Library, University Libraries, Pennsylvania State University.

### **Arrangement**

Organized into three series: Correspondence, Writings, and Artwork.

Correspondence arranged alphabetically by correspondent, thereunder chronologically.

### **Separated Material**

Books have been removed and cataloged separately.

## Biographical Note

Novelist, short story writer, playwright, editor, journalist, and scholar, Enoch Arnold Bennett was born 27 May 1867, in the pottery district of northern England in Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, England, the son of Enoch (a potter turned solicitor) and Sarah Ann Longson Bennett. The large house the family moved to in Burslem later became the Arnold Bennett Museum. Bennett attended Burslem Endowed School and also attended art school. As the eldest of six children in an achievement-oriented family, Bennett felt pressured to succeed; he developed a lifelong stammer that would later prevent him from giving public readings. He worked as a clerk in his father's law office from ca.1885-1888. In 1888 Bennett twice failed his legal examinations; his father, though exasperated, consented to his move to London to become a shorthand clerk in a law office. In London, Bennett frequented "cultural" circles. He sent stories to magazines, and began selling old and rare books by mail. In 1894 he gave up the law and, with his father's help, took a position with the weekly magazine *Woman*.

At *Woman*, Bennett served as assistant editor, 1893-1896, and editor, 1896-1900. Bennett the journalist is a lively writer, usually amusing, often wise, always readable. His interests range widely across worldly affairs, his observations are realistic and shrewd, his judgments detached and compassionate. In the six years 1894-1899 Bennett published more than seven hundred periodical pieces. By far the greatest number were book reviews, followed in order by theater reviews, music reviews, and his own light fiction. In 1900 he quit his editorship to become a full-time writer. In 1895, he published the story "A Letter Home" in the prestigious magazine *The Yellow Book*, and began a novel, *A Man from the North*, which, upon its publication in 1898, was regarded as an impressive debut. One month after that novel's publication, Bennett's *Journalism for Women* was published, helping establish the pattern of prolific, diverse output that would typify his career. He contributed articles to the journal *Academy*; was director of the *New Statesman*, 1915; wrote weekly "Books and Persons" column for *New Age* under the pen name Jacob Tonson, 1908-1910, and for the *London Evening Standard*, 1926-1931. He co-managed the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, London, with Sir Nigel Playfair and Alistair Tayler, during the 1920s.

Despite a widening experience of the world, the temperamentally shy Bennett longed for a settled married life. In 1906, at age thirty-nine, he proposed to an American woman, Eleanor Green, with disastrous results. Green, sister of the novelist Julian Green, broke off the engagement after wedding invitations had been sent out, for reasons that have never been clearly explained. Green herself later described the fiasco as a ridiculous misunderstanding. After this rebuff, Bennett met and married on 4 July 1907 a tall, striking, French dressmaker's assistant, Marie Marguerite Soulie, who had recently become his secretary in Paris where he had gone to live after the death of his father in 1902. He and Marguerite made their home in the French countryside near Fontainebleau and then in Paris for several years. In 1912 they went to live in Thorpe-le-Soken, Essex. They had no children. The marriage was a failure, ending in separation in 1921 when Soulie would not grant Bennett a divorce. However, his early married years evidently provided him with the proper environment to create his first

masterpiece, the 1908 novel *The Old Wives' Tale*. This two hundred thousand-word book was written in ten months, by hand, during a period in which Bennett--an insomniac--also produced two shorter, comic novels, 1908's *Buried Alive* and *Helen with the High Hand*, published in 1910.

The year of *The Old Wives' Tale*, 1908, also saw the publication of Bennett's most successful "pocket philosophy," *How to Live on 24 Hours a Day*, as well as the first indications of his success as a dramatist with *Cupid and Common Sense*. Bennett would have major box-office successes with 1911's *The Great Adventure*, 1912's *Milestones*, and 1922's *Mr. Prohack*, as well as numerous smaller successes, but dramatic writing was, for him, a swimming against the current: George Bernard Shaw, who tried to teach him the craft, finally concluded that Bennett wrote plays as if they were novels. *Clayhanger*, the first novel in a trilogy of that name, was published in 1910. It was immediately successful in England and America, and helped solidify Bennett's position as an important man of letters, as did its sequel, *Hilda Lessways*, published one year later.

By World War I, Bennett was one of the most famous authors of the day in England, and his views were sought, and they were given in profusion. He had friends in government, he served on voluntary and official war committees and eventually in the government itself, in the ministry of information as director of propaganda in 1918. Occasionally he wrote at the request of the government, as with the small book that followed from his official tour of the front ( *Over There: War Scenes on the Western Front*, 1915), and in articles on the Irish uprising in 1916. Bennett's postwar life was marked by marital strife and a decline in his journalistic output. Both, however, began to improve after he met the actress Dorothy Cheston in 1922; the two moved into a house in London, and though they were not formally married, Cheston eventually took the name Bennett by deed poll. Near the end of that year, Bennett began writing *Riceman Steps*, often considered his finest later novel, which was received favorably upon its 1924 publication by such luminaries as Wells, Hardy, and Joseph Conrad. In 1926 Cheston gave birth to Bennett's daughter, Virginia, and Bennett published another successful, dark novel, *Lord Raingo*, which has been called one of the great political novels in English.

Bennett's last novel, 1930's *Imperial Palace*, was a long-planned opus that examines in detail the workings of a great hotel. It was Bennett's second hotel novel, the early *The Grand Babylon Hotel* being his first; but while ambitious, serious, and commercially profitable, *Imperial Palace* was trumped by another hotel novel published the same year, Vicki Baum's bestselling *Grand Hotel*. On January 1, 1931, he dined with James and Nora Joyce; at the hotel, he insisted on drinking water despite the waiter's warning that it was not safe, and within twenty-four hours Bennett was ill. Bennett died 27 March 1931, in London, England, of typhoid fever.

## Scope and Content

The collection contains Arnold Bennett's correspondence with his agents, colleagues,

and publishers; manuscripts of some of his articles and books; and six watercolors he painted.

The correspondence with Bennett's publishers concerns topics such as the design of bookcovers, illustrations, various proofs of manuscripts, publishers asking for autographed copies of certain novels, publishers asking Bennett to write prefaces for other authors' books they publish, discussion about the rights Bennett has over works in Europe and in the United States, publishing new editions of Bennett's books, and working out new contracts and serializing his stories.

Jonathan Cape Limited mislabeled and misquoted Bennett in an advertisement for James Joyce's *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*. Cape used a quote from Bennett's review of *Ulysses* by mistake, and then went on to incorrectly portray what Bennett actually said, showing Bennett to compliment the whole book, when Bennett was only writing about one chapter, and that he actually criticized other parts of the book. The ad is included in the collection, as are Cape's letters of apology.

Newman Flower, Bennett's editor at Cassell and Company, the major publisher of his novels in England, received a letter of complaint about Bennett's *The Pretty Lady* from the Catholic Federation of the Archdiocese of Westminster who saw Bennett's book as "grossly offensive to Catholics," and wanted Flower to take action about it (i.e., stop circulation). Bennett sent a three-page letter asserting strongly that it was not intentional, end of discussion. Newman Flower also received a letter from Mrs. Thomas Hardy, and relates to Bennett that she said about his book, *Riceman Steps*, Thomas Hardy was "absorbed by it," and highly praised the book.

George H. Doran Company was Bennett's primary American publisher. George Doran had a very close friendship with Bennett; Doran visited and stayed with Bennett every year or so, and the two swapped updates on how their wives and Doran's daughter were doing. The Doran correspondence highlights the "butting of heads" of Doran and James B. Pinker, Bennett's agent, and Doran's attempts to expand Bennett's publicity by getting his works published in popular periodicals such as the *Saturday Evening Post*. Pinker's letters can be found in a separate sub-series.

In many letters Doran and Bennett discuss the state of the war (World War I) and how Bennett is a member of the Wounded Allies Relief Committee of Sardinia House, Kigsway, London. Doran talks about the war efforts of his office by making it headquarters for allied literature, and Bennett discusses how he's in charge of British propaganda for France. Doran writes to Bennett in 1928 to inform him that his company has merged with Doubleday. Bennett expresses regret over the absorption of Doran's name into the name of any other firm, however big.

The correspondence with James B. Pinker and Sons concerns matters of royalties, contracts with publishers and magazines, copyright issues and American piracy, obtaining placement of Bennett's articles, plays, and books in Europe and the United States, and content issues. Pinker sold the rights of numerous works to various countries: Russia, France, Spain, Hungary, Poland, Finland, Germany, among others.

Blind people transcribed several of Bennett's stories into braille. The correspondence also includes Bennett's monthly account with Pinker's agency, as well as periodic updates on the sales figures of his works. Several American university professors ask permission to use excerpts of his work in their classes.

In 1913, James Pinker became Bennett's dramatic agent as well as literary agent. Doris Keane, an American actress, wants to have Bennett's *Sacred and Profane Love* made into a play either by Bennett or someone else, as she wants to play the leading female role. A 1914 letter contains Henry James' thought on Bennett's *The Price of Love*.

In 1918, Bennett was asked to take an important post in the Ministry of Information. American newspapers want Bennett to go to Russia in 1920 to interview important people and describe the conditions under Soviet rule. Major Drapkin Limited Company wants Bennett to write a series of articles on the pleasure of smoking which they would use in conjunction with the company's ads though he would not have to cite a specific brand. At first Bennett thinks it beneath him, but changes his mind when he remembers preaching that decent writers should write ads, so he cannot refuse.

In 1922, James Pinker dies and his eldest son, Eric, takes over the business. Eric's brother, Ralph, joins the firm later. Bennett continues working with the sons and by 1926 Bennett sold the film rights of *The Great Adventure*, *Buried Alive*, *The Grand Babylon Hotel*, *The Card*, *The Old Wives Tale*, *Sacred and Profane Love*, and *Milestones*. The following year Bennett sold the film rights to *The City of Pleasure* to a German firm and *The Sinews of War* to Victor Savile; and *Death, Fire, and Life* in 1928. Alfred Hitchcock does not like Bennett's *Punch and Judy* film story in its present form; Hitchcock wants them to be circus characters. In 1930, Victor Savile wants to make *The Pretty Lady* into a talkie and thinks he can get past the censors despite the story dealing with a prostitute.

Eric Pinker and Bennett discuss who he will want to be his new American publisher since George Doran left Doubleday-Doran, following a series of events within the publishing house, to be William Randolph Hearst's ambassador to Europe for Hearst's Cosmopolitan Book Corporation. Bennett's unstinting loyalty to Doran originally prohibits him from considering making a contract with Hearst because he does not like Doubleday's list and thinks they are too conceited. However, Bennett decides not to make a contract with either of them.

After Bennett's death in 1931, his estate executor authorizes Eric Pinker and J. Ralph Pinker to complete negotiations and to receive any money due to the estate for the film rights to, or an option on, *Imperial Palace*.

## Index Terms

These materials are indexed under the following headings in the catalog of the Pennsylvania State University. Researchers wishing to find related materials should search the catalog under these index terms.

## **Personal Name Subjects**

Bennett, Arnold, 1867-1931 -- Archives

## **Topical Subjects**

Authors, English -- 20th century -- Manuscripts

## **Corporate Correspondents**

Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.

Bookman Journal

Cassell and Company

Chapman and Hall

Chatto and Windus (Firm)

Doubleday, Doran and Company

Ernest Benn Ltd.

Frank Palmer, Publisher

George H. Doran Company

Harper and Brothers

Hodder and Stoughton

Jonathan Cape (Firm)

Methuen and Co.

T. Werner Laurie (Firm)

## **Correspondents**

Pinker, James B.

Secker, Martin, 1882-1978

Sturt, George, 1863-1927

## **Corporate Creators**

Sotheby and Co. (London, England)

## **Form/Genre Terms**

Correspondence

Manuscripts for publication

## **Container List**

### **Correspondence Series**

Correspondence, 1903-1931.

### **Agent**

Box 1

Folders 1-23

James B. Pinker and Sons to Arnold Bennett, 1903-Dec. 1919

Box 2

Folders 1-19

James B. Pinker and Sons to Arnold Bennett, Jan. 1920-Mar. 1927

Box 3

Folders 1-13

James B. Pinker and Sons to Arnold Bennett, Apr. 1927-1931

### **Publishers**

Box 3

Folder 14

Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. to Arnold Bennett, May 1924

Box 3

Folder 15

The Bookman Journal to Arnold Bennett, June 1924-Apr. 1925

Box 3

Folders 16-17

Cassell and Company to Arnold Bennett, Jan. 1918-Jan. 1931

Box 3

Folder 18

Chapman and Hall to Arnold Bennett, May 1908-Feb. 1927

Box 3

Folder 19

Chatto and Windus to Arnold Bennett, Dec. 1922-Jan. 1927

Box 3

Folder 20

Doubleday, Doran and Company to Arnold Bennett, Mar. 1929-Jan. 1931

Box 3  
Folder 21  
Ernest Benn Ltd. to Arnold Bennett, Apr.-Aug. 1927  
Box 3  
Folder 22  
Frank Palmer, Publisher to Arnold Bennett, Jan. 1910-Jne 1911  
Box 3  
Folders 23-26  
George H. Doran Company to Arnold Bennett, Nov. 1909-Dec. 1928  
Box 3  
Folder 27  
Harper and Brothers to Arnold Bennett, May 1925-Feb. 1926  
Box 3  
Folder 28  
Hodder and Stoughton to Arnold Bennett, Feb. 1925-Nov. 1928  
Box 3  
Folder 29  
Jonathan Cape Publishers to Arnold Bennett, Apr. 1924-Nov. 1929  
Box 3  
Folder 30  
Methuen and Co. to Arnold Bennett, Apr. 1922-July 1925  
Box 3  
Folder 31  
Secker, Martin to Arnold Bennett, May 1924-Apr. 1925  
Box 3  
Folder 32  
T. Werner Laurie to Arnold Bennett, Dec. 1922-Sept. 1923

## **Authors**

Box 4  
Folders 1-13  
George Sturt to Arnold Bennett, 16 June 1895-1929, undated

## **Writings Series**

Writings, 1910-1930, 1936.

## **Bibliography**

Box 5  
Personal Bibliography, 1910-1925

## **Catalogues**

Box 5  
Sotheby and Co. (London, England). *Catalogue of the Manuscripts and Correspondence of Arnold Bennett Sold in Part by Order of His Executor, and in Part by that of Mrs. Dorothy Cheston Bennett*, 25 May 1936

Printed; includes a two-page list of prices and buyers' names.

## **Film Scenarios**

Box 5

*Punch and Judy*, 12 Nov.-17 Dec. 1928

## **Novels**

Box 5

*Lord Raino*, 13 May 1925

Draft, manuscript notes; bound in three volumes, in slipcase.

Box 5

*These Twain* (Part I), Sept. 1915

Printed; published in *Munsey's Magazine*

## **Operatic Libretto**

Box 5

*Anthony and Cleopatra*

Manuscript; adaptation of William Shakespeare's play.

## **Plays**

Box 5

*Flora*, 17. Sept 1924 - 31 Mar. 1925

First draft holograph, 17 Sept. 1924; second writing typed and holograph, 4 Nov. 1924.

Act I: third writing, typed, edited, inserted holograph pages.

Act II: second writing, 12 Nov. 1924; third writing with deletions on typescript, additions in holograph.

Act III: second writing, 17 Nov. 1924, holograph; typescript and holograph additions, 31 Mar. 1925.

Bound.

Box 5

*What the Public Wants*, 1910

Printed; published in *McClure's Magazine*, Act I: Jan. 1910; Act II: Feb. 1910; Acts III and IV: Mar. 1910

## **Reviews**

Box 5

Bennett's review of Frederic Manning's *The Middle Parts of Fortune*, 15 Jan. 1930

Holograph manuscript; with carbon typescript letter from Bennett to Manning, 15 Dec. 1930, concerning the review.

## **Short Stories**

Box 5

*The Night Visitor*, 1929

Carbon typescript, corrected; two blueline illustrations and pencil page mock-ups; page proofs, corrected; galleys, corrected for *Nash's Magazine*.  
Bound; spine title: Author's corrected typed ms. and corrected proof.

## **Artwork Series**

Watercolors, 1912-1917.

Box 6

Portrait of Mrs. Bennett, 16 May 1914

Box 6

[Trees], 24 May 1914

Box 6

[Flower], 2 Nov. 1914

Box 7

From Ship Friesland, 16 Sept. 1912

Box 7

[Lawn and two trees], 7 Sept. 1913

Box 7

[Woman seated in front of large house], 27 May 1917