

From *A Writer's Diary* by Virginia Woolf

Saturday, March 28th, 1931

Arnold Bennett¹ died last night; which leaves me sadder than I should have supposed. A loveable genuine man; impeded, somehow a little awkward in life; well meaning; ponderous; kindly; coarse; knowing he was coarse; dimly floundering and feeling for something else; glutted with success; wounded in his feelings; avid; thick lipped; prosaic intolerably; rather dignified; set upon writing; yet always taken in; deluded by splendor and success; but naïve; an old bore; an egotist; much at the mercy of life for all his competence; a shopkeeper's view of literature; yet with the rudiments, covered over with fat and prosperity and the desire for hideous Empire furniture; of sensibility. Some real understanding power, as well as a gigantic absorbing power. These are the sort of things that I think by fits and starts this morning, as I sit journalizing; I remember his determination to write 1,000 words daily, and how he trotted off to do it that night, and feel some sorrow now that he will never sit down and begin methodically covering his regulation number of pages in his workmanlike beautiful but dull hand. Queer how one regrets the dispersal of anybody who seemed—as I say—genuine: who had direct contact with life—for he abused me; and I yet rather wished him to go on abusing me; and me abusing him.² An element in life—even in mine that was so remote—taken away. This is what one minds.

To notice:

Woolf intertwines her description of Bennett's physical characteristics with his professional characteristics and comes to a sudden conclusion about the passing of time and life and how that passing affects her.

¹ Arnold Bennett, 1867-1931, was an English novelist. He also served as an editor, journalist, and critic.

² Abuse" and "abusing" refers to Arnold Bennett as someone who criticized Virginia Woolf's work as a professional critic and literary contemporary. While this criticism may be personal, the word abuse here does not refer to any kind of inappropriate verbal or physical abuse.