

# BOOKS and AUTHORS Reviews and COMMENT

## LITERARY CRITICISM AND BOOK NEWS

### Mr. Wells on Current Tendencies—"The Grand Tour"—Karl Witte—A Brilliant Study of the Balkan Peoples.

MR. WELLS'S "APOLOGIA." "SOCIAL FORCES IN ENGLAND AND AMERICA." By H. G. Wells. 8vo, pp. 24. Harper & Bros.

Mr. Wells gives us in this book, so he informs us, a "fairly complete view of all my opinions. It is practically all my miscellaneous writings for the last four or five years, edited and drawn together into an effective whole." It is in this co-ordination of these articles, written at different times and on apparently unconnected or, at best, but slightly connected topics, that lies the greater interest of the volume, for it demonstrates how deeply and logically Mr. Wells has reflected upon all the phases of our bewilderingly complex and confusing civilization, and how he has reached the conclusion, constantly reiterated, that we are "milling," not progressing; that our governments have fallen far behind the collective intelligence and the aspirations of the governed, and that what is needed, if chaos and revolution are to be averted, is "a great science of social adjustment and a disciplined and orderly machinery to turn enthusiasms into effect."

We have, then, in these pages the practical rather than the prophetic Mr. Wells. He is not so much concerned with a far distant future of perfected social, economic and personal adjustments, as with the here and now—and the morrow—chiefly at home in England, but also in this country.

He has long been the Cassandra of his nation, warning, protesting, crying out loud to awaken it from the inertia which, in his opinion, threatens to place it in the rear instead of in the van of the great powers. "Either we are a people essentially and incurably inferior," he exclaims, "or there is something wrong in our training, something numbing in our atmosphere." And, as he has done often before, he concludes that it is British education which is at fault. The foreigner is not of the Briton in this, he insists, and it is especially true of the middle and upper classes, from which invention and enterprise come. This text, one need not remind the reader, occurs time and again in Mr. Wells's writings—in his novels as well as elsewhere. There is the navy, for instance. All

that can be thought of is to build more and ever bigger superdreadnoughts, but the foreigner, he is quite certain, has invented and keeps secret in readiness lighter, handier, swifter, far less expensive engines of destruction which will revolutionize naval warfare with one, to England, disastrous blow. The country does not encourage inventors, innovators, men of ideas and initiative. It puts its faith in routine. In foreign affairs its statesmen do not look ahead at all. Germany is the only enemy they can conceive of; yet, says Mr. Wells, the day will come when Germans and English will stand side by side on the East Prussian frontier; the Russian danger in India has simply been lost sight of.

Most of all it is he concerned, however, with the labor question in England, and with the inconceivably shortsighted attitude of British capital:

The working man of to-day reads, talks, has general ideas and a sense of the world; he is far nearer to the ruler of to-day in knowledge and intellectual range than he is to the workman of fifty years ago. The politician or business magnate of to-day is no better educated and very little better informed than his equals were fifty years ago. . . . These are the new conditions, and the middle-aged and elderly gentlemen who are dealing with the crisis on the supposition that their vast experience of labor questions in the seventies and eighties furnishes valuable guidance in this present issue are merely bringing the gunpowder of misapprehension to the revolutionary front. . . . Prats of legal subtlety are ineptitude, arithmetical exploits still more so. To emerge with the sum of 4s. 6d. as a minimum, by calculating on the basis of the mine's present earnings, from a conference which the miners and everybody else imagined was to give a minimum of 5s. may be clever, but it is certainly not politic in the present stage of labor feeling.

It is when Mr. Wells turns to the discussion of American affairs that he is least satisfactory—to Americans, at least; fully as unsatisfactory as most American observers writing of England to Englishmen. He spent a brief time with us six years ago, and wrote

a superficial book about us, abounding in hasty generalizations. It proved, for one thing, in its strictures upon our local rather than national political conditions, his utter unfamiliarity with the far worse conditions of fifty, of thirty years ago. He gave his attention chiefly to our large cities, and there saw the alien in his multitudes. The real American country appeared to him only as a wilderness dotted with settlements connected with iron rails. So here he bewails the fact that in New England the sturdy native stock is being submerged; he does not know that a larger New England, modern but true to type at the core, has grown up in the Middle West. He sees an increasing danger in the influx of many races. We are no longer Anglo-Saxons, he says. True, perhaps, but we have managed to remain Americans, and we are sternly determined to remain Americans hereafter. Even so, an hour's consultation of "Who's Who in America" would have shown Mr. Wells how, in all fields of endeavor, our leaders bear Anglo-Saxon names—how insignificant is the percentage among them of representatives of the alien stocks—even of Celts and Germans.

Mr. Wells has failed from the first to understand the seriousness, the devotion to high causes, of the spirit of reform that is abroad in this country. He still sees among us little beyond a "non-moral individualism," and our new spirit is, in his eyes, "merely the vanishing tradition shouting at the top of its voice to be heard at all." But, he confesses, no European standards can be applied to the judgment of American problems and affairs.

What Mr. Wells thinks of the English schoolmaster we know; he has told us ere now of his plan of making medicine a branch of the government service. What he has to say about divorce is not unfamiliar to us, neither is his dislike of amateur reformers and their panaceas; and his aggressive statement that fiction has the right to take all life for its province was cabled to this country when first he made it. All this acquires new value as it takes its place here in the "organized whole," which leads up to that supreme interest of the author, which he has done so much to make ours as well, the as yet undeveloped possibilities of the Human Adventure.

The book is, in a sense, Wells's apology—the confession of his hopes, his fears, his aspirations. One lays it down with a fuller understanding and appreciation of this useful servant of the race, this extremely practical idealist.

### "THE GRAND TOUR"

Globe Trotters of an Earlier Day.

ENGLISH TRAVELLERS OF THE RENAISSANCE. By Clara Howard. Illustrated. 8vo, pp. xvii, 232. The John Lane Company.

The English have always been in certain respects a strangely paradoxical people. They are proverbially insular, and yet conspicuously cosmopolitan. No other in the world, not even the French, are so closely attached to their native soil; yet no other people are comparable with them in far-wandering adventure and wide distribution as colonists throughout the globe. They are self-centred, self-sufficient, conservative and clanish; yet they have a supreme genius for contact with other peoples, and for citizenship of the world at large.

Miss Howard's book affords a reminder of the long established prevalence of these traits. We would not say that she tells of their origin, for that was long before the time of which she writes, if, indeed, it was not contemporary with the origin of the English nation itself. The Elizabethan age was in these respects at one with the Victorian. These characteristics of the English people were then as fixed and as generally recognized as they are to-day. But perhaps some of the circumstances and conditions, both subjective and objective, were different.

Miss Howard gives us a detailed study of the motives which impelled Englishmen to travel abroad, particularly on the continent of Europe, in what was known as the "grand tour," in what is described as the age of the Renaissance. That was a time of transformation, of expansion, of flux, religious, intellectual and political; in which it was well for the citizens of a world power to become acquainted with the world, and to get into touch with all the great movements of the day. And at first it was for such purposes that Englishmen went abroad. They were the possessors of curiosity, and of a realization of the practical value, indeed of the necessity, of their learning what they would thus acquire and what they could hope to get in no other way. They were discriminating, too, in their choice of routes. They went to Italy for scholarship in letters and art. They sought France for the grace of courtesies and for the skill and finesse of diplomacy. They visited Germany for philosophy and for the theology of the Reformation. Being apt pupils, acquiring knowledge, culture and experience as "nation of shopkeepers" acquires material profit, they took their gains home with them and in time made England much more sufficient unto itself, so that there was less need

to travel for these things, and the grand tour became a pursuit of pleasure and amusement.

Those were the days before Baedeker. Yet the literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries teemed with guide-books. These were perhaps guides to conduct more than to places; filled with subjective suggestions and admonitions rather than with objective information. They gave their readers general and detailed directions concerning behavior and manners and customs, so that when the travellers were in Rome they might readily do as the Romans did. For that very reason these old works are of their chief value for study in our time as an instructive disclosure of the temper and equipment of the English mind of that day, and of its attitude toward the outside world. Miss Howard's little volume



SUMATRAN WOMEN (FROM "JAYA and HER NEIGHBORS" G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS)

may of necessity be somewhat superficial. So is the skimming of cream superficial; but it is a process which gathers the best of what is before us. She has taken the cream from a multitude of volumes, and the result is highly palatable and nutritious.

### EDUCATIONAL POSSIBILITIES

The Successful Experiment of a German Pastor.

THE EDUCATION OF KARL WITTE; or, the Training of the Child. Edited, with an introduction, by H. Addington Bruce. Translated from the German by Professor Leo Wiener. 12mo, pp. xi, 212. The Thomas Y. Crowell Company.

Just one hundred years ago Karl Witte, the fourteen-year-old son of an obscure German clergyman, took the degree of Ph. D. at Leipzig University, and two years later was made an LL. D. and appointed to the teaching staff of the University of Berlin. In 1832 he was made a full professor of jurisprudence at the University of Breslau, being transferred to that of Halle two years later, where he died in his eighty-third year and in full command of his intellectual powers. He was a many-sided man, not a narrow specialist; a happy man, and, to the last, physically a sound one. His life and career disproved all the dire predictions of early death or insanity made by the wisecracks of the period from his eighth year onward.

A remarkable man, but in a way, one would think, less remarkable than his father, who began his education only a few months after his birth and controlled and supervised it until he was well on his way toward his first doctorate. "In an age," says Mr. Bruce, "when no enlightenment was possible to him from anthropology, psychology and the allied modern sciences that have for their chief object the study of human characteristics; in an age when tradition and dogma still enslaved pedagogical theory, this humble country clergyman in a little German village arrived by some miraculous power of intuition at the selfsame conclusions held by the most advanced educational thinkers of the present day."

Pastor Witte wrote an account of the early home training of his son, which, after having been translated into English, fell into complete oblivion. Professor Wiener has made a new translation, however, eliminating masses of superfluous and disquisitional matter, and thus giving the main narrative its full value, which remains as great after a century of educational progress as it was when first written. Thus pruned the book proves to be of exceptional intellectual interest, even to those who have no intention of essaying in the case of their own children the systems followed by Pastor Witte, by the fathers of John Mill and Lord Kelvin, and, more recently, by Dr. Boris Sidis, Dr. A. A. Berle, of Tufts; Mrs. J. B. Stoner, of Pittsburgh, and by the translator of the book. Most significant of all, of course, to educators, is Pastor Witte's assertion that his child was in no way precocious. On the other hand, the life of the entire family and even the demeanor and the talk of friends and guests were directed toward only this one purpose, the education of Karl Witte.

### THE AUTHOR OF "GILLESPIE."

John Macdougall Hay, the author of that brutally powerful story of Scotch life, "Gillespie" (Doran), was born at the fishing village of Tarbert, on Loch Fyne, and it is Tarbert that is so vividly described in the pages of his novel under the name of Briston. Mr. Hay is now the young minister of Elderslie, in Renfrewshire, the birthplace of Sir William Wallace.

### THE DUTCH EAST INDIES

A New Tropic Paradise for the Globe Trotter.

JAVA AND HER NEIGHBORS. A Traveller's Notes in Java, Celebes, the Moluccas and Sumatra. By Arthur E. Walcott. With 25 illustrations and a map. 12mo, pp. xvii, 360. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

Little is known as yet outside Holland of that little country's magnificent island possessions in the Indian Ocean beyond their products, their riches and the success of their administration. Occasionally they figure in the speculations of world politics as still another possible bone of contention between England and Germany, or, what seemed at one time to be far more

tourist is sure of a welcome and of everything that can be done for his comfort.

This is an excellent travel book. The author has a quick eye for natural beauty, and for the picturesque and the quaint in the life of natives and colonial Dutch alike. He describes well, and seems to have "done" Java and the minor island groups thoroughly. Of Borneo he has but little to say; and Sumatra is at best even to-day only partly opened up. Our author does not enter too deeply into the history of these islands and their teeming millions, nor does he enter into the problems that here, as in British India, are raising their heads to vex the conquerors—the growing problem of Chinese commercial and financial influence, for one thing; Japanese in-

### THE BALKAN PEOPLES

History, Past, Present and Future in the Near East.

THE BALKANS: A Laboratory of History. By William M. Sloane. Member of the American Academy, Professor of History in Columbia University. With Maps. 12mo, pp. viii, 222. Eaton & Mains.

It is in a certain respect gratifying to discover in this generally capital book some strange errors and statements which must provoke sharp challenge. Why, for example, should the author, writing in 1914, say that the capture of Miss Stone by Macedonian brigands occurred less than ten years ago? The date was September, 1901. Surely a chronicler should verify his dates. Again, why should he so cocksurely declare that "Servians" means "slaves," and that the name was given to them to express contempt for their servile status? There are many ethnological philologists who would be much interested to know the grounds for that statement.

These are perhaps minor matters, but for that very reason they are the less excusable. Yet they are gratifying, since they give us authority and encouragement for doubting the infallibility of other portions of the work which we should be very sorry to be compelled to accept without qualification. The volume is so well written and contains so much information that it would be wholly convincing if it were not for some of these indisputable slips. And it would be a pity for it to be entirely accepted because the net result would be almost indescribably depressing. The view of the author is that of a pessimist. He sees, indeed, some good qualities in some of the Balkan peoples, but he sees ever so many more faults. He recognizes some achievements for good, but much more the difficulties of the Balkan problems. At the end, he leaves us with a feeling of almost utter hopelessness.

There is some provocation to this attitude, for the history of that region has been hideous. The Balkans are well named a laboratory of history, for in few comparable regions has more of the world's history been made. Much of the horror we can justly charge against the Tribe of Othman. Yet before its coming, in Byzantine times, there were tragedies which the world shudders to recall; while as for the later days, we cannot dispute Professor Sloane's declaration that the Christians have done worse things than the Turks. It is notorious that much of the worst devilry that has been charged against the Turks in the last score of years has really been the work of Christians.

Some individual judgments concerning the Balkan peoples attract attention. The author appreciates the superb qualities of the Rumanians, and records the truth—too often ignored or suppressed—concerning their heroic deeds in 1877, when they saved the Russian army from destruction, and when they and not the Russians were the real victors at Plevna and the captors of the mighty Osman. But surely we cannot agree with his opinion that they are little to be blamed for their oppression and proscription of the Jews. The very reasons which he gives for their animosity against the Jews are condemnatory of their policy. He takes the view that Alexander of Bulgaria was kidnapped and deposed by the Bulgarians themselves because of his subservience to Russia, in which he may be right, but in which he certainly runs counter to the general belief of the world, which is that Alexander was the victim of Russian intrigues because of his indomitable loyalty to Bulgaria and his resistance of schemes for making the country a Russian province. His generally poor estimate of the Serbs does not appear to be justified, though he is probably quite right in holding that the abominably savage butchery of Alexander and Draga was instigated and directed by Russia.

Despite all points to which we take exception, the book is in some respects a brilliant production, of immense utility. If its known errors embolden the reader to use his discretion in discounting it wherever it becomes too depressing in its outlook upon the Balkans, and in dissenting from its judgments when they do not accord with the views of other authorities, there will be left a residue of information and suggestion such as we shall scarcely find elsewhere in so compact and attractive form, and such as will mark this as a singularly valuable contribution to the literature of one of

the world's oldest and chiefest centres of historical interest.

### "CHANCE."

It is reported from London that nearly 25,000 copies of Joseph Conrad's new novel have already been sold in England. The book has been "out" in this country only a few weeks, but the signs are unmistakable that with us, too, its author has found his wider public at last. It was said in these columns the other day that Conrad's art is essentially one of infinite pains, and this statement is borne out by a recent letter from him in which he writes that "Chance" is his quickest piece of work; that he wrote its 140,000 words, more or less, in nine months and twenty-three days—an average of a little more than 450 words a day. When the MS. was finished, he adds, "I went out and walked in the drive for half an hour. It was raining and the night was still very black."

## HARPERS BOOKS

### Social Forces In England and America

By H. G. Wells.

"Here," says Wells himself, "is a fairly complete view of all of my opinions. It is practically all my miscellaneous writings for the last four or five years, edited and drawn together with an effective whole." He discusses divorce, motherhood, schoolmasters and doctors; the political disease of our times; speculates upon the future of the American people; considers a possible setback to our civilization, which he finds menaced by panics and war.

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