

## WASHBURNE TALKS IT OVER WITH MR. WELLS

Letter to Winnetka Talk Tells of Interesting Visit to Famous Writer

### GETS SOME ADVICE

#### Wells Pessimistic on World Situation

Following is the second of a series of letters directed to the editor of the Winnetka Talk by Carleton W. Washburne, superintendent of Winnetka Public Schools, who is now in Europe conducting a special investigation of European experimental schooling in the interest of the local schools, the Illinois State Department of Public Instruction and the United States Bureau of Education.

Mr. Washburne is meeting many interesting persons in his travels. The reader will be especially interested in the following letter, which contains an account of Mr. Washburne's hour and a half alone with none other than the famous and extremely interesting Mr. H. G. Wells.

Mr. Washburne's second letter reads:

To the Editor,  
Winnetka Weekly Talk,  
Wilmette, Ill.  
Sir,

In last week's letter I promised that I would let you know something about the people we have met. We really have been very fortunate in meeting worth-while people and getting into touch with some of the currents of thought over here in Europe.

The person of highest rank, but of lowest stimulating power (I hope none of you know him, as I should not like to have you send this letter to him

—he really was awfully nice), was the Earl of Sandwich. I had tea with him in the Cavendish Club in London, and we talked about education in England. He is a strong believer in keeping the education of the different classes distinct, although personally he seems affable and democratic.

By way of contrast, we went to dinner at the 1917 Revolutionary Club in London, where we met writers and dancers and poets, and all kinds of radicals. We discussed everything, from the training of English nursemaids to fine arts and revolution. It was quite funny and stimulating.

I shall leave out our interviews with various educational leaders and our very pleasant tea in a London suburb with an English feminist writer and lecturer, and I think I shall even have to omit our breakfast in the tiny cottage of a little Lancashire woman in the mill district of Northern England, even though she talked the whole time about schools, and gave us some interesting sidelights. But I should like to tell you about our tea with Mr. and Mrs. H. G. Wells.

It was in their spacious London flat, and Mrs. Washburne and I were the only guests, so we had an hour and a half of Mr. Wells all to ourselves. His wife, who is quite charming and full of conversation when Mr. Wells is not in the room, is utterly silent when he begins. Indeed, we all were. One question from me would start a 10 to 15 minute discourse on his part. We covered the world—from the origin of civilization to the probable immediate relapse of Europe into barbarism.

Mr. Wells was quite pessimistic on the present world situation. He said "There has never been a time when the future has been so unknowable." I asked him if he saw no hope at all. He said, "that depends upon what I have had for dinner. Sometimes I feel that we intelligent people will take over the governments of various European countries and run them sanely, and at other times I see nothing but complete collapse of the whole present industrial system. Such a collapse would mean that only 15 million people could live where 40 million live now. Before the other 25 million die they will raise considerable trouble. We in England are likely to think that we can stay out of it all, but that is perfect nonsense. You in America may be able to survive the collapse of Europe for 30 or 40 years, but sooner or later you will

find that your splendid isolation is a fiction—not a fact."

He gave us all sorts of friendly advice in regard to going into Russia, such as telling us to be sure to take some kind of preventive of vermin. We asked him what kind he could recommend. He replied with a twinkle "Oh, whichever kind you are most accustomed to using."

In Belgium the sister-in-law of a Hubbard Woods mother entertained us most royally in the paternal country home of her father. It was the sort of country estate that has gamekeepers, and the sort of home where a butler supervises the work of all the other servants who hover round you. The father was one of the most interesting men we have met. He was in charge of all the Belgian relief for the province of Antwerp, and himself contributed 3,000,000 litres of milk to Belgian babies, having a herd of cows driven over from Holland to his own country estate so as to supply this milk. His views on German reparations, on French policy, and on European affairs generally were sane, well thought out and stimulating.

We have had a number of contacts with European thought—several bankers, one of the editors of a communist newspaper in Paris, a Swiss financier, and a delegate to the League of Nations in Geneva, and tomorrow afternoon we have tea with Romain Rolland and his sister at the other end of Lake Geneva.

And our journey is not yet half over!

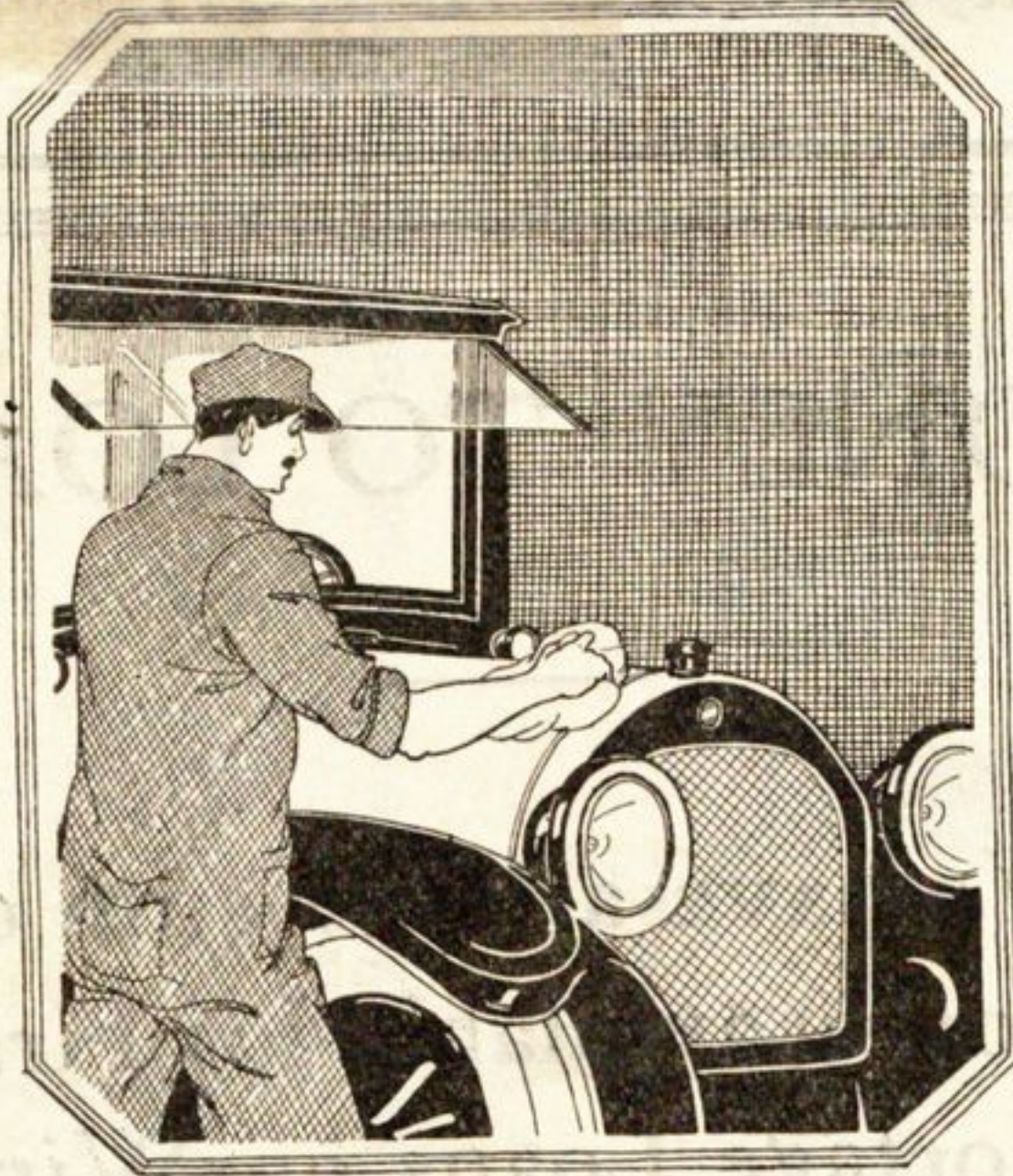
Cordially yours,  
CARLETON W. WASHBURNE.

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