

### HAS H. G. WELLS SUFFERED A RELAPSE?

In His New Book, "The Secret Places of the Heart," All the Characters Are Atheistic, and the Hero, a Sensualist, Declares That Men Over Forty Do Not Feel the Need For a Personal God.

By Professor W. T. Allison.

After issuing such a gigantic labor as his "Outline of History," H. G. Wells would not have been blamed by his most devoted admirers if he had gone to the Bell Islands for a five years' rest, far from pen and ink and world problems. But this literary Hercules feels just as fresh and fit as Premier Lloyd George, that human dynamo of the political world; no doubt both these famous workers imagine that they cannot be spared in the task of straightening out the New Age, the rather nebulous post-war period in which civilization is now groping its way. Lloyd George is doing his part as guide by letting his mercurial genius play over Genoa conferences and such like; Mr. Wells is trying to lead the nations into pastures of new socialistic experiment by educating public opinion by means of his books. He has now probably a larger audience than any living author and he cannot put by the opportunity to deliver an exhortation to his mighty army of readers among the nations at least twice a year. His last four books, including his history of the world, have been deliverances on social and political problems, but with his latest work, actual contact is his forty-fifth book, he has returned to the field of fiction. But "The Secret Places of the Heart" (The Macmillan Company, Toronto) is not, as its seductive title might imply, a story of pure sentiment. Like "Mr. Britling Sees It Through," and "Joan and Peter," it is a novel with a purpose; it has been written with the intention of educating the reader along social lines, not of entertaining him in the early Wellsian manner. The propaganda in this book is not as heavy as that of the "Outline of History," nor so vituperative as that of "Joan and Peter."

But with its admixture of sex-stuff it is quite pronounced and we still hear the voice of the would-be reformer of this pig-headed world seeking to persuade us of the possibility of making all things new.

**Sir Richmond Hardy Consults a Psychiatrist.**

The plot of this story is very simple. Sir Richmond Hardy, a wealthy Englishman, a coal magnate, becomes infected with the Wells gospel of internationalism, co-operation between the governments of the world in taking over coal and oil and using them economically. When the story opens he has been acting for some time on a coal commission and has been trying to convince capitalists and laborites of the absolute necessity for the adoption of his views of humanity is to make the progress that it should. He has been using up all kinds of energy in his encounters with the advocates of things as they are and feels that unless he can get some drug to reinforce flagging nervous system he will soon go to pieces and the battle will be lost. So he consults Dr. Martineau, the eminent psychiatrist of Harley street. After a long dialogue between Sir Richmond and the doctor, the patient decides to accept the quiet physician's advice and accompany him on a motor-trip through western England. The journey begins, and no sooner are the two men on the road than the specialist be-

gins to probe the secret of places of Sir Richmond's heart. After the most approved modern psychological methods, all of which are as A B C to the omniscient Mr. Wells, the patient is induced to deliver from day to day a sort of mental serial story, the story of his mind from boyhood days; he is even frank enough to disclose the motives which prompted him to marry and the motives which later on led him to be unfaithful to his wife, to be an amoralist depending upon the companionship and encouragement of various women for the necessary impetus to engage in his enthusiastic championship of the social reform. It is not until the voluble Sir Richmond and his medical adviser reach Stoneheage that anything really happens in the story. But here doctor and patient encounter a young American woman and her elderly travelling companion. Sir Richmond's abnormal delight in the company of interesting young women is at once manifest, and to Dr. Martineau's disgust he insisted on taking the ladies back to Avebury and Silbury Hill to give them a lecture on archaeology, a subject in which he was very well posted. As the doctor had already heard this lecture on the preceding day he did not wish to retrace his steps. Moreover, he feared that his patient would soon be making love to the intelligent and charming Miss Grammont of New York. And what the doctor feared soon came to pass. In spite of the fact that he had received due warning from the psychologist, together with a warm protest from that gentleman at having broken the agreement they made in London, Sir Richmond allowed the doctor to break away from him at Salisbury. Continuing the trip with Miss Grammont and Miss Sayfer, her tactful companion, Sir Richmond found within a day or two that the young lady was in love with him and that he had fallen in love with her. Mr. Wells allows these very intellectual lovers to have only a few days together and then he parts them to meet no more. Miss Grammont goes to Falmouth, where she specially is oil, and Sir Richmond goes back to London to throw himself with new-found energy into the work of the Fuel Commission. A month or so later he contracts a bad cold but is so keenly interested in his work that he refuses to give up and go to bed until it is too late. His dies of pneumonia, with no one but Dr. Martineau beside him in his last hours.

#### A Coal and Oil Rapid-Fire Romance.

Simple as is this plot, it is not immune from criticism. Mr. Wells arouses our incredulity when he makes Miss Grammont, a strong-minded American woman who has been beset by scores of young men in New York, and who is still grieving over the loss of a lover killed in the war, fall madly in love, almost over night, with this elderly married man from London. It strikes me that it would take at least a month for even as good a talker as Sir Richmond to reconcile a young lady of Miss Grammont's refined type to the fact that he was a married man about twice her age. Another artificial touch in the story is the novelist's conjunction of oil and coal in this love affair. Sir Richmond burned with the desire to induce all the coal and oil barons of the world to sell out their interests to an international fuel commission. Judge his enthusiasm, therefore, when he, the owner of a coal mine and the leading spirit of an English coal commission, was able to inspire the daughter of an oil millionaire not only with love for him but with enthusiasm for his great scheme to bring about state socialism in fuel. But it is a little too much for the reader to believe that these ardent lovers would willingly separate in order that the girl might prepare to take over her aged father's oil interests and the man to promote his part of the undertaking in London. Evidently Mr. Wells felt that he had to kill off his hero rather than wind up his story in melodrama.

#### A Chicken Hatched in a Thunderstorm.

But slight and improbable as is the plot of Mr. Wells' new story every reader who is interested in the psychology of the new age will derive much enjoyment and not a little instruction from "The Secret Places of the Heart." Both Sir Richmond and Dr. Martineau are up to the minute in historical, social, and psychological new thought. Sir Richmond admits that he is fifty-seven but confesses that he feels at times like "a chick." Sir Richmond is a capitalist himself, but he thinks that everything in our world is heading for a social smash-up. Everything is short and running shorter—food, fuel, material. But the profiteers go on as though nothing had changed. Strikes, Russia, nothing will warn them. He declares that there are brother capitalists on his commission who would steal the ties off a mountain railway just before they went down in it. The doctor tells his patient that this sense of a coming smash is epidemic, that it is a new state of mind, and is at the back of all sorts of mental trouble. Before the war it was abnormal—a phase of neurasthenia. Now it is almost a normal state with whole classes of intelligent people. We are suffering

nowadays from a loss of confidence in the general background of life, so that we seem to float over abysses. "This peace is a farce," the doctor expanded, "reconstruction an exploded phrase." The slide goes on—it goes, if anything, faster, without a sign of stopping. And all our poor little adaptations! Which have been elaborating and trusting all our lives! One after another they fail us. We are stripped. We have to begin all over again. I am fifty-seven and I feel at times nowadays like a chicken new-hatched in a thunderstorm."

#### Man's Inheritance From the Ape

There is plenty of this talk about the coming social smash-up unless man mends his ways, that is to say unless he acts on the advice so lavishly and insistently supplied him by Mr. H. C. Wells. And in addition to the thunderstorm atmosphere of this book, there is much psycho-analysis from Dr. Martineau, who is really H. C. Wells in disguise. In common with James Harvey Robinson, the American psychologist whose book "Mind in the Making" I reviewed a couple of weeks ago, is quite sure that the motives which emerge from the subconscious mind of the most refined modern man are largely shaped by his ape ancestors. As I have read Dr. Martineau's Darwinian observations along this line, I have been chuckling to think how they would infuriate William J. Bryan, leader of the present anti-simian crusade. Take this passage, for instance, "The wonder is not that you are sluggish, reluctantly unselfish, inattentive, spasmodic, the wonder is that you are ever anything else. Do you realize that a few million generations ago, everything that stirred within us, everything that exalts human life, self-assertions, heroisms, the utmost triumphs of art, the love—for love indeed for the fate and welfare of all this round world, was latent in the body of some little lurking beast that crawled and hid among the branches of vanished and forgotten Mesozoic trees? ... People always seem to regard that as a curious fact of no practical importance. It isn't; it's a vital fact of the utmost practical importance. That is what you are made of. Why should you expect—because a war and a revolution have shocked you—that you should suddenly be able to reach up and touch the sky?" Man of to-day is a creature of the darkness with new lights. He is lit and half-blinded by science. He sees the possibility of controlling the world, has caught the idea of service, understands something of the self beyond self. But this is but a partial and shaded light as yet; a little area about him has been made clear, the rest is still the old darkness of millions of intense and narrow animal generations. Man has wakened out of an immemorial sleep to find himself in a dimly lit chamber. He is not alone in it. He is not lord of all he surveys. His leadership is disputed. "The darkness even of the room you are in," says Dr. Martineau-Wells, "is full of ancient and discarded but quite unsubjugated powers and purposes. They thrust ambiguous limbs and claws suddenly out of the darkness into the light of your attention. They snatch your feet and dog your elbow. They crowd and cluster behind you. Wherever your shadow falls, they creep right up to you, creep upon you and struggle to take possession of you. The souls of apes, monkeys, reptiles and creeping things haunt the passages and attics and cellars of this living house in which your consciousness has awakened."

#### Literary Notes.

An American book buyer who crossed swords with the celebrated Quaritch at an auction sale in London the other day is Mr. Philip Rosenbach of Philadelphia. The book on the block was the famous Daniel copy of the First Folio Shakespeare, published in 1623. It was knocked down to the American at \$8,600. The same rare old book was sold by auction in April, 1921, for \$4,200, a price which was regarded at that time as enormous. Think of making a profit of \$22,000 on one book in one year! This looks like profiteering. But what a confidence the Philadelphia man reposes in the Swan of Avon or rather in the keenness of some American multi-millionaire to "own" the highest-priced of Shakespeare's relics.

This Mr. Rosenbach gave another remarkable proof of his faith that old books and manuscripts are good investments, even at unheard of prices by buying at the same sale the autographed copy of Charles Dickens' "Haunted Man" for \$3,700. He explained to someone who wondered how a few sheets of paper could be worth such a large sum that there are two main reasons. "Firstly, people fail to realize the pleasure which the 'Christmas Carols' and other of Dickens' works give to American readers, and this particular copy will probably be purchased by someone who read the story in his youth, but who never realized that he would be able to possess the actual copy written by the hand of the master." I yield to no one in admiration of Dickens, but I cannot imagine that if I were as rich as Croesus or Rockefeller that anyone could capitalize my interest in "The Haunted Man" at \$18,500. But no doubt the optimistic Rosenbach will haunt some millionaire until he extracts from him \$30,000 for "The Haunted Man." How Dickens would have loved to have made game of this man! If such extravagant habits had existed in his day!

But why is it that some famous old books are worth almost nothing? Several years ago an English friend bequeathed me a beautiful copy of the first folio edition of Thomas Fuller's "Worthies of England." It was published in 1662, and, as everyone will agree, it is one of the greatest books written during the seventeenth century. Having read reports of the big prices obtained in London and New York for old books, I imagined that in millions of dollars my copy of old Fuller would be worth a good deal of money, possibly a thousand dollars or even more. Last Christmas I was in New York and dropped in to see Mr. Brentano who is an expert in the rare book business. What was my astonishment when he informed me that my treasure would not bring more than twelve dollars in the book market! He admitted that it was an immortal work and all that, but he said there was no demand for it. But perhaps the millionaire will fancy Fuller one of these days and then my ship will come in.

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The fading shadow of a vanished God. Sir Richmond is really far worse off than an ancient pagan, for he says: "I want mating because it is my nature to mate. I want fellowship because I am a social animal—and I want it from another social animal. Not from any God—any inconceivable God who fades and disappears. No—I can believe that over all things Righteousness rules. I can believe that. But Righteousness is not friendliness nor mercy nor comfort nor any such dear and intimate things. This cuddling-up to Righteousness! It is a dream, a delusion and a phase. I've tried all that long ago. I've given it up long ago. I've grown out of it. Men do after forty. . . . Only young people have souls complete. The need for a personal God, feared but reassuring, is a youth's need." Let us hope that Mr. Wells has not had such a relapse as this. Surely he cannot be guilty of such bad logic as to say that there can be a power called Righteousness (the capital letter is his) and deny it such attributes as friendliness, mercy and comfort. If there is a just God, He must be loving and merciful. And what utter foolishness it is for any man to say that the need for a personal God is a youth's need! The whole experience of our race disproves such a statement.

—W. T. Allison

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