

collaborates with a lawyer and a cloying sob-story is manufactured to entertain the ragtime intelligence of the jury. Cardovan is pictured as the protector of the sanctity of the American fireside. It was not murder but noble frenzy. *Dementia Americana* of the Thaw case, rewritten. But here the author succeeds merely in writing a travesty of the criminal trial of two decades ago. Cardovan is acquitted and returns more lovingly to his Olivia, but she conspires with a jazz composer to steal his two best arias and pervert them into popular jazz tunes. She needs money to pay for clothes. He is more pained by the desecration of his conception than the treachery of his wife.

One thing is certain. Cardovan never had a sense of the comic, and he was blind to the colors, and deaf to the tempo of his own time. Perhaps his interpreter did not understand him. Anyway, jazz continues to corrupt Cardovan's America, with solemn jazz rites in erstwhile orthodox Temples of Music. And even visiting European conductors and composers see glamour, color, and strange promise in this monstrosity of jazz—and welcome it as America's contribution to music.

The Inimitable Spectator

THE ILLITERATE DIGEST. By WILL ROGERS. New York: Albert & Charles Boni. 1924.

Reviewed by DAVID McCORD.

SOONER or later most of us go the way of the printed page. For Will Rogers it might just as well have been sooner, and probably would have been had not the exigencies of his post as first lariat of the Follies, the lure of the wicked screen, and a summer with the Democrats in New York filled his hours. It might just as well have been sooner because Will Rogers's wit is the kind that blossoms under all administrations. It is as good today as it was yesterday, and will probably be no better tomorrow. He is not aiming at any more of a literary style than the unconscious flux of his rope talk. He imitates nothing. He is not perfecting bad grammar or making a god of the exquisite solecism. He has no quarrel with ancients or moderns. Because he has said much of it before in unpremeditated fashion, his book is a harvest of honest, homely speech. It is Will Rogers.

"Nothing is no good," he says. So few of our humorists realize that. But almost anything is very good for Mr. Rogers's purpose. He can shake down the potential laughter in a farrago of subjects from chewing gum and corsets to the Prince of Wales. Like Mark Twain (but a little differently) he walks with kings and princes and presidents and Henry Ford and Fred Stone. He is at home with the world and its denizens. Somebody once gave him a license of free speech (or perhaps he took it without asking); but, at any rate, in the past few years he has probably turned over more heavy stones and thrown hot sunlight upon the poor human grubs underneath than any man in the United States. Will Rogers is a philosopher and crusader in the tradition of Walt Whitman. He passes generally for a humorist, but that is not the whole of him. Humor is his calyx, not the flower.

Did anyone ever call Mr. Rogers a *poseur*? Impossible. He fearlessly and continually strives to be himself. He continually succeeds. "Defending My Soup Position" steams with honesty. His language, however crude or native, as one may like to call it, dresses the idea to advantage. Politics, bathing suits (one-piece), critics, white breeches, the income tax, California, W. J. Bryan, and the Court of St. James take new life when he talks about them. We will laugh at what he says, and remember whole segments of it no more because it is funny than because, ten to one, it is beautifully true. At least two chapters transcend all banter. One is a tribute to Mr. Wilson, the other an estimate entitled "What We Need Is More Fred Stones."

It has been said of Max Beerbohm, even that incomparable stylist, that many of his essays are decisive matter and will pass as the figures of his times fade from recollection. In all ways how much more is this good natured humanism of the author of the "Illiterate Digest" inseparably linked with temporal names and temporal interests. Will Rogers is for his generation and his day. He is a rare interpreter

of the events of the moment. He is a kind of cowboy Spectator, assimilating the worst of our foibles, or perhaps the best, and making us believe that they may not be so portentous after all.

Political Freethinking

A YEAR OF PROPHECYING. By H. G. WELLS. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1925. \$2.

Reviewed by MANFRED GOTTFRIED.

SOME books, and this is one of them, make a poor first impression. "A Year of Prophecy-ing" is a collection of fifty-five brief articles on men and events written weekly during the course of about a year from the fall of 1923 to the corresponding season of 1924, or by political reckoning from shortly before until almost the close of the Labor Government's tenure of office in England. Such a collection is rarely inviting, and the poor first impression of the present volume is aggravated because some of the earlier essays are rather trivial or, as Mr. Wells himself puts it in his closing remarks, "just bad." Moreover, this type of book tempts one to peruse it in snatches, whereas if one is to appreciate the book one must get its general rather than its piecemeal effect.

For it has a unity—the unity which is Mr. Wells's social philosophy. This theme, this type of thought, has been the preoccupation of his later career. In the present work he discusses the League of Nations, the national policies of Great Britain and France, and more casually, of the United States, the future organization of Germany and Russia, international finance, Pan-Latinism, "Pan-Englishism," civil and military aeronautics, armaments and disarmaments, tariffs, communism, socialism, education, dictatorships and democracy, nationalism, sex, birth control and population control, electoral reform, party government. Except for one digression, which is a gracious tribute to Anatole France, he adheres to one theme through all these diverse topics, and that theme is the development of a rational social organization.

This practice of constantly referring particular instances to general principles places these articles, although the conjunction may seem grotesque, in a certain community with the remarks of Doctor Johnson and the columnizing of Arthur Brisbane. To be sure, Mr. Wells has not the dogmatism of assertion which gave pungency to the lexicographer, and he is a great deal more reasonable and intellectually agile. To be sure, he cannot pigeonhole things in such simple categories as Mr. Brisbane, and he is a great deal less uneducated.

His theme of a rational social organization conjures up for him a Utopia—he calls it that—which is not greatly different from the present world except that people are less ignorant and more intelligent. "I live," he explains, "very much in a dream of a saner world." He believes that the present League of Nations is a start in the wrong direction, and looks forward to a "League of Mankind against Nations."

I am for world control of production and of trade and transport, for a world coinage, and the confederation of Mankind. I am for the super-State, and not for any League. Cosmopolis is my city, and I shall die cut off from it. . . . The world is a patchwork of various sized internment camps called Independent Sovereign States, and we are each caught in our bit of patchwork and cannot find a way of escape.

Naturally with this ideal, and with his demand for reasonable procedure, Mr. Wells finds plenty to criticize in the conduct of his contemporaries. He likes to abuse them and knows that he does it well and goodnaturedly. Winston Churchill, Herbert Asquith, Lloyd George, Hilaire Belloc, each receives a share of rating. He makes fun of them directly and by his friendliness with their "bogeys." Communism is to Mr. Wells an intellectual stimulant. "I have a real affection for Communists," he avers, "and a temperate admiration." Socialism he regards as in large measure already at hand.

In America these ideas of Mr. Wells are not likely to find a welcome, principally because they are too new here. He advocates Proportional Representation as the only "approach to political sanity" in democratic elections; yet in this country not one-tenth of the so-called educated class know Proportional Representation by name and not one hundredth know it to think about. He speaks of state

dissemination of contraceptive knowledge; here contraception is not considered except as a matter of individual or at most class morality. He refers to population pressure; but this country has not yet awakened to the idea that such pressure can exist. He looks upon free trade and tariffs as economic devices; whereas here they are tenets handed down in violation from generation to generation, much like moral precepts or religious persuasions. Mr. Wells goes right ahead, however, planning his "reasonable Utopia" without waiting for America—or England for that matter—to catch its mental breath.

The weakness of his plans is that they rest on a gratuitous assumption as to the nature of the driving force of human progress. Progress he sees; evidence of it was preëminently thrust upon him when he wrote his memorable "Outline." Something had urged the little unicellular bit of life onward and upward to man, and from mere man through barbarism to civilization. But in drawing plans for his Utopia he is actuated mainly by what he deems desirable and reasonably attainable. Yet the limitations of any Utopia to which man can aspire depend on the nature and direction of the driving force which has moved man upward. It is quite futile to plan a Utopia in some other direction than that toward which this force aims. The matter of the direction of the driving force is all important. There is no probability that the force itself can ever be altered. It has obviously made man all that he is, and doubtless it is immutable, but even if it were not, the man who undertook to change it would be very brave indeed; for there could be no pretending what would come about. The practical object of Utopias is rather to anticipate the workings of this force. When man fails in this anticipation, nature corrects him, painfully. Mr. Wells bothers little about the direction of this force. He has a general idea and that is enough for him; on the basis of it he is willing to try to save the world its spankings for stupidity.

In this connection he has an amazing faith—amazing in one generally so skeptical—in the advantages which the material improvements of science may bring to man. It is faith akin to that displayed by the Victorians. The idol of his faith is aeronautics; he sees in the conquest of the air a new lifting of man's burdens; he even grows petulant with the political organization of Europe because it interferes with the pleasure of unrestricted riding in aeroplanes—a form of travel to which he is very partial.

"A Year of Prophecying" is really an epitome of a political free thinker. It is a strong dram of intellectual stimulant. Ever and again Mr. Wells produces a sentence at once titillating and full of insight, as when he says of Mr. Lloyd George that "he has with him the affectionate distrust of a multitude of his countrymen"—that "the most fundamental fact about youth is its disrespect for its elders and the past," or that "the people of the United States, for a time the spoilt children of the human race, are so fortunate in their isolation and their vast unity that the efficiency of their government is a matter of no immediate concert to them." Such things may be said, and said to a purpose—and with a penalty.

When you censure the Age
Be cautious and sage.

Mr. Wells is not cautious. If he were a little more cautious the Age might be less inclined to ruffle up its back and turn away when he is talking at his best.

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Franco-Prussian Annals

THE ORIGINS OF THE WAR OF 1870.

New Documents from the German Archives.
By ROBERT HOWARD LORD. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1924.

Reviewed by CHARLES DOWNER HAZEN,
Columbia University.

PROFESSOR LORD at the beginning of his book carefully defines his purpose and then proceeds throughout to adhere to his definition. He is not attempting a complete and definitive history of the origins of the Franco-German War, as that would necessarily be a work of many years and particularly as much of the essential material, German, French, and other, has not yet been given to the public. He is not even attempting a comprehensive study of the Hohenzollern Candidacy, since the German papers relating to the early history of that epochal intrigue—"papers which," he says, "must excite the liveliest curiosity of all who have delved into that tantalizing historical mystery"—are not yet open to investigators. But he is attempting a history of the brief and crowded period that began when the Candidacy became known in Paris, July 4, and that ended on July 15 when this "Spanish bomb" had done its work and when war was virtually declared by the French parliament. It is a history of twelve days, for the War of 1870, like that of 1914, was whipped up and set a'going in that brief span of time. In the light of these two illustrious examples a widely prevalent impression that diplomacy is a dilatory and dawdling art would seem to need revision. Under willing and competent hands it can develop all the speed that is really desirable.

In the accomplishment of his purpose Professor Lord has had at his disposal new historical material of the first importance, thanks to the German Revolution of 1918 and the subsequent liberal opening of the archives of the German Foreign Office. "In the past year," he says,

I have had the privilege of using and of transcribing in full the seven volumes of documents which contain the German official record of the diplomatic crisis leading up to the outbreak of the War of 1870. As these documents have hitherto not been printed (with very few exceptions), and have been seen by only a few investigators, it has seemed worth while to publish them, as a contribution to the history of a period so pregnant with fatal consequences.

Considerably more than half of the volume is devoted to these documents which are published as found, and which are invaluable for the student. The rest consists of a history of the crisis from day to day, from hour to hour, almost from minute to minute. It is difficult to see how the work could be better done.

Professor Lord is a past master in the analyzing and appraising of diplomatic documents and in their utilization in the construction of a solid, severely tested, well-butressed historical narrative. He has no thesis to maintain but he has a tale to tell, which is his distillation of his reading of the sources. He is as impartial as a man can be. This does not mean that he distributes light and shade, praise and blame, more or less evenly upon all the parties to the conflict, which appears to be the definition of impartiality held by some historical writers. He is positive and emphatic where the evidence imposes emphasis. He is reserved or tentative where the documents render such an attitude the only safe one. Such phrases as "I am inclined to think," "I think it highly probable," "We have no evidence," "Neither could lay claim to a faultless veracity," and many others which occur throughout the narrative, inspire with confidence the reader, who moreover is told at every step just what the evidence is and is given every facility to test the validity of the deduction in question. Mr. Lord's critical power is constantly alert, he preserves his sense of proportion throughout, never losing sight of the subject as a whole in the midst of the numerous details, and he has a talent for penetrating through the masks of the actors to the actors themselves, for reading between the lines, when that particular process is called for.

He has, in short, written the most authoritative account of one of the great crises of modern history, chiefly from the standpoint of Prussian policy, now lighted up by the new material. It is impossible to summarize the story, but it can be stated that it is intensely interesting and is here told with a precision of phrase and a critical acumen that make the book a model of its kind. Students or writers of diplomatic history must inevitably admire its workmanship.

The BOWLING GREEN

Jamie Comes to Hy Brasil

GR^EAT things happen: sometimes in a burst of instantaneous completion; oftentimes by slow indignations, through every grade of postponement, doubtful addition, and nail-paring disgust. But they do happen, and sooner or later the man with a blessing hears about them. The magic that moves our days brings us, by unsuspected curvature, home to ourselves. Believing our path to be a straight line—and going up, of course—we do not feel it leaning and bending beneath us, nor know it was a circle until we hear ourselves repeating what we said before—in a little louder voice.

The beginning of this particular magic (so far as I am blessed by it) was one snowy day when an enchanter (you would not have known him as such, if you saw him, carrying a black leather suitcase and bulged about with a greatcoat from which I saw a glass phial protruding) descended from the train at Manhasset. Certainly it would take too long to tell you about this enchanter, how we sat by the fire together, how it snowed, how he went to a meeting of the Poetry Society that night (against all my advice, for nothing so surely nips the deep root of poetry in the breast as annual dinners of Poetry Societies), and what he wrote to me about it afterward. I will merely call this enchanter Tom, since that is his name.

While we were sitting at lunch Tom was narrating a passage from a book he had read. It was an Irish book, and Tom being Irish himself he conveyed the full flavor of it. It was one of the most thrilling feats of memory that I have ever applauded: it was not memory but re-creation. He recounted, in the just accent, the tale of three notable miscreants who were hanged. One of these malefactors was annoyed because there were not enough women present. Another was bored, and yawned so gappingly that the executioner could hardly adjust the rope, and reproached him for his rudeness. The third was so thirsty that even as he swung he could not die until he had been taken down and given a drink. I give you these bald details merely because, so given, they sound nothing at all. But when you read them—or hear them in the Irish voice—they become that small bonfire of mirth, gilding the lower branches of the dark Tree of Life, that we call literature. Even the children at the table forgot to prattle while Tom told this story.

The book it comes from, though by one of the authors who means most to me, I had not encountered. I had not even heard of it. Then, a few days later, I saw it in a bookstore. I averted my eyes, for I was accompanied by several under-nourished phantoms of my own who were clamoring for blood, and I did not want to hearten myself with other men's ghosts. But then, not half an hour afterward, in the cabinet of another enchanter, whom we will call Mitchell (also, by odd coincidence, his name) I saw the book again. I opened it and began to read; I saw, what I had not been quite certain of, that it was the same that Tom had mentioned. "Take it along," said Mitchell. I was so eager to do so that I tried to persuade him not to give it to me. "Nonsense," he said, "I have two copies. I always buy two copies of every book, so I can give one away."

And then, the third enchantment. I was going home in the train, two or three days later. I was approaching the end of the book; approaching it with dismay, as one struggles to wrap round him the dissolving shreds of a dream that is about to vanish. The man in the seat beside me must have been a third magician, though I had not guessed it, for he was reading the *Evening Journal* and wore a particularly Hollywood shape of hat. He got out at Great Neck and left his paper on the seat. I laid down my book with the notion that Mr. Hearst would surely have provided something sufficiently grotesque to ease me of the exquisite pang of what I had been reading. And the very first thing I see in the *Journal* is an appalling photograph of the author of my precious book; and an interview with him; he had landed in New York that day.

This does not prove anything. (What does?) But it suggests that it is not well to neglect the magic that moves round us. If you sew together enough random scraps of it you will have an apron of fig-leaves almost large enough to conceal you from the world. And it set me thinking as to how the man who wrote that book might better have been welcomed to New York than by the interview in the *Journal*, which purported in a noisy way to elicit his views on Love; or even than the photograph, which showed him in a hat quite as distressful as the one that got off at Great Neck, or the plush horror that I am wearing myself at this moment because I am going to the theatre this evening. How, I wondered, should James Stephens have been met; and what could be said? For that is his name; the James Stephens who wrote "The Demi-Gods," and who wrote the book of which I speak here—"In the Land of Youth."

This is a question to which there can be no answer. Literary criticism is a fine and fecund art; as some writers perform it—for example William Gerhardt, in his book on Chehov, which does not seem to have received its due honor—it is an excitement and a warmth in the mind that linger for months after the reading. But a book such as "In the Land of Youth" transcends the realm in which criticism is viable. It is unmixed moonlight; moonlight neat. It fulfils that beautiful truth that Mr. Gerhardt (in the Chehov book) laid down—"A work of art whose aim and meaning were quite clear to the writer in the act of writing it would perish, as the universe would perish if its aim was clearly known to it." In the case of such a book, people who can enjoy it will need no help; and those who cannot could never be taught how. For the author of such a book the only just reception (perhaps) would be to have no one meet him at all: to have the pier and the dockside streets cleared of anyone who might possibly know who he was; and to have every publisher in town herded in the lobby of some hotel until, at the touch of a hand-bell, Mr. Stephens appeared, with a gay symbolic gesture, to release them. I am not joking: for it is such men as Mr. Stephens who justify the existence of publishers and make their lives interesting and their jovial trickeries of distribution atonable and good.

"Your mind had to be tormented and fevered and exalted before you could see a god," is said somewhere in "In the Land of Youth." It is a strange book; to make it fashionable among some of the moderns we might call it a fantasy of miscegenation between two worlds—that of the gods and that of men (or Irishmen anyhow). And those that find it unreadable will be, I suppose, the lucky ones. Certainly no writer can afford to read it unless he is very stout-hearted; for he will find in it the music, the laughter, the simplicity, the bare and evasive truth, that he himself probably missed in a soapsud of words. Luminous as a crystal, it gathers light around it until it shines with a brightness of its own; a brightness pure and unpurposeful enough to show how dark the world is.

If Mr. Stephens was welcomed, as he should have been, by a file of publishers in shackles; and if, as he would, he then struck the irons from their ankles and greeted them with some merry redeeming work; and if they then repaired to various telephone boxes to order a resumption of the processions of the press, well and good. If he was not so welcomed, I don't know what to suggest, except that I am willing to show him my private cathedral. From this secret eyrie where I hide and write I look out upon the great piers of the Brooklyn Bridge. They are pierced by tall lancet openings, that look, in the pearly East River air, like vast cathedral windows. There are two of these empty windows at each end; and between them rises my imagined cathedral. Of its creed or its various architecture I have nothing to say; of its various tablets—whether to Walt Whitman or to Charles Edward Montague, or whoever—I do not now speak. But it would be pleasant to take Mr. Stephens down the aisle of that intangible minster, and to let him hear the organ sounding in honor of the unknown god, who disciplines no parishes and no sects; the god who now and then allows great poetry to be written. I should lay near the altar a copy of "In the Land of Youth," and say to Mr. Stephens:

"So came Jamie to Hy-Brasil."

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.