Pax Mundi

WHAT ARE WE TO DO WITH OUR LIVES? By H. G. WELLS. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1931.

Reviewed by HENRY TRACY

HERE is something which has to be read. A review will not dismiss it. To make reading possible and prompt and widespread, we have it in a paper binding. It is safe to say that this expresses the wish of the author. He writes under a vivid sense of world stresses. More so than is common with this ardent and prolific propagandist? I think so. At least more completely in focus.

Condensed and directed at a particular point in time—the exact present—the logic of the book is coercive. This is no inspirational treatise on what to do with our personal lives in order to escape boredom. A number of pertinent facts are cited, calling attention to the way our world impinges on its individuals—not merely one class or type, but all persons of all ranks and persuasions—and constrains them, variously dwarfing, obstructing, defeating them, so that their lives miscarry. They are obvious facts. Who denies them? But the peculiar genius of Mr. Wells consists in his ability to take commonplace, indisputable and therefore universally tolerated facts, and make them into a pretty cogent chain of reasoning. This he did (so we say) in middle life, for a diversion. Respectable Edwardians were annoyed by certain implications they found in his books, but the cure was easy: not read him! Strangely enough their cure did not work. The disease called H. G. Wells persisted. And now, just when this dubious and perhaps contagious case should have been passing, with gout and cane, into harmless desuetude, comes this disturbing little book, in cheerfullest yellow paper cover and a very selling title.

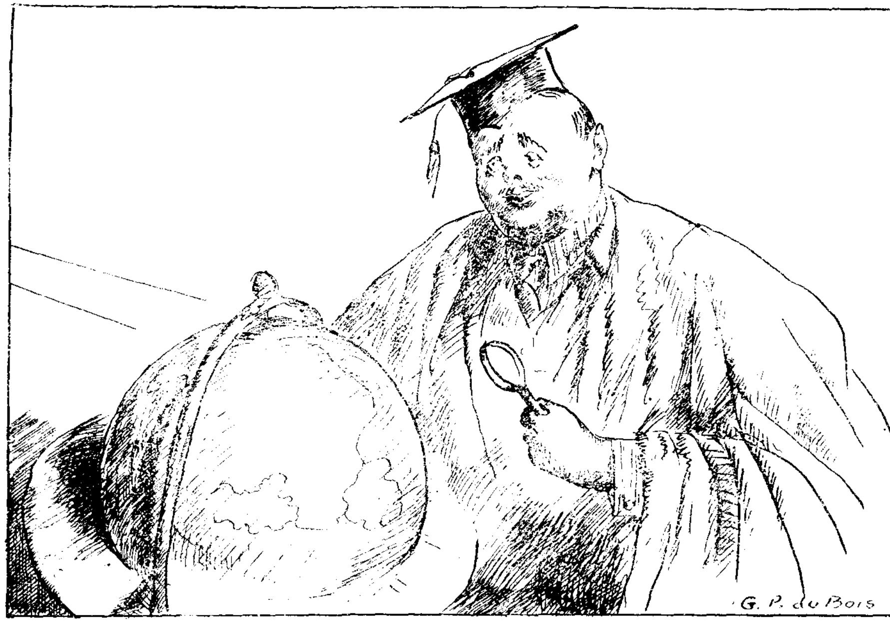
Only a fool would attempt an academic review of it. If anything can blast the mental inertia of the common man, here is the dynamite. *Homo sapiens europœus,* the common or garden variety of man, with H. G. Wells as self-confessed incarnation of him—this man, tired of waiting for somebody with genius or higher intellectual gifts to come along and provide it for him, decides to form a new ideology of things, and one that will work. And he does it. There is the gist of this slim but compact manifesto. As for its point and purpose, it is that of "The Open Conspiracy" brought down to date and stripped for action.

Those who thought that Herbert George Wells had done his bit and retired, were mistaken. "The Outline of History," "The Science of Life," "Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind" merely lay in his path. So we find, early in this new work, where he recapitulates the crucial nodes in the evolution of his doctrine. This present volume is its cap and condensation. What makes it so (quite apart from his own admissions) is the fact that it contains dynamics. It incites to intelligent action; is no manual of political non-resistance; proposes to revise the conduct of world affairs by revising our conduct of the world mind. Here is a manual of moral self-education, and one infinitely more to the point than if its drift were scattered through the pages of "Joan and Peter." The author of one hundred and eight books or pamphlets should know, by now, what he has to say, and should be able to condense it. He should and he does. Here is the proof. And what has the man to say? Nothing new, really. He has to say that we are due for the beginnings of an alignment among intelligent people the world over, for a world civilization "that will enable us to realize the promises and avoid the dangers of this new time." And he has to show that such a notion is not Utopian. His ground is, belief in the power of an intelligent minority; this power gradually spreading, through reforms in education. He looks to the "Atlantic States" of Scandinavian, German, Dutch, French, English and other European peoples to unite with an American minority (not yet in power) for constructive research, foreshadowing a gradual taking over economic and political control when the world is ripe for it.

Now if such ideas are distressful to any reader he may do as did the Edwardians, and turn his eyes another way. But it may surprise a few to know that this treatise is expressly anti-Marxian. It disposes effectively of such shibboleths as "proletarian," denies the validity of "class war," and punctures the notion of a discreet and immiscible interest called "Labor." It holds out hope for the discovery of social intelligence among bankers. It describes the Russian Five Year Plan as an autocratic and capitalistic measure.

Apart from its serious intent, it would be a pity to miss the many pungent and pithy phrasings one finds scattered all through these pages; or the good satire. But, after all, there is one thing in it I should count it criminal to neglect, and that is, a priceless parable (I have it red-lettered in my notes, and the page is 126). It is called the story of the pig on Provinder Island. It is a "parable," in God's truth, but the lines laid down in the Gospels are changed; the thing is hilariously funny. This reviewer had begun reading "What Are We to Do With Our Lives?" at twelve, midnight. It was two-thirty when he came to the parable of the pig. It released him—and since release for humanity is the keynote of the book, he was right to call it a day, and a good one.

Henry Tracy is a biologist and author of many books in belles lettres, *among them "English as Experience."*



MR. WELLS LOOKS AT THE WORLD.
Drawn for the SATURDAY REVIEW *by Guy Pene du Bois*

The American Racket

WYATT EARP, Frontier Marshal. By STUART N. LAKE. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1931. $4.

Reviewed by STANLEY VESTAL

EXCEPTING only Billy the Kid and Sitting Bull, there is no name of any frontiersman within living memory around which so many legends and myths have been piled as the name Earp. The exploits of that famous family of gun-fighters, and especially the exploits of Wyatt, most celebrated of the brothers, have provided no end of themes for discussion, have whiled away the tedium of countless readers of Western stuff, and have made the fortunes of whole flocks and sects of writers who dealt in more or less fictionized versions of those thrilling encounters. So thick was the veil of legend, so dim the mountain of fact, that readers had a hard time making sure whether the Earp boys were murderous desperadoes or heroic officers of the law. But now the clouds are swept away, the facts stand clear. Wyatt Earp has spoken.

His career as hunter, pioneer, buffalo-hunter, gambler, cowman, and marshal carries the reader into many of the most celebrated cow-camps and mining-camps of the old West—Dodge and Wichita, Deadwood, and Elsworth, and the rest—all the way from Tombstone, Arizona to Nome, Alaska, and back. We see him in constant action, facing mobs and drunken killers, shooting his way out of tight corners, dragging bad men out of trouble by the ears, tracking road-agents patiently through waterless desert, afoot and hungry and dogged by faithless deputies in league with the very men he was after. We meet gamblers, Fairy Belles, Texas cow-outfits hell-bent to hurrah the Jayhawk cow-towns at the end of steel, and most thrilling of all, we follow the long sanguinary duel between organized, protected crime in league with Arizona sheriffs and the fighting Earps, which ended in the cowardly killing of "Morg" Earp, and Wyatt's revenge. It is the old American racket all over again.

In this book a thousand disputed facts are cleared up, and the facts convincingly presented. So far as one may judge a book which brings so much that is fresh and unexpected, the author has made a rare contribution to authentic Western history, and has presented a thoroughly interesting, gripping, clear, and credible story. The book is eminently readable, without the usual attempts to excite the reader with rhetorical tricks and sensational handling. So well has the author caught the spirit of his subject that the frequent passages taken verbatim from the man of action, Wyatt Earp, cause no interruption or distraction from the main narrative style. Mr. Lake writes as straight as Wyatt Earp shot. A sound performance, which will please all those readers of Western books who are now as exacting in matters of style as they have always been in matters of fact and detail.

As to these, the merits of the book are legion. We have Wyatt Earp's long explanation and discussion of the fine points and technique of gun-play, illustrated by examples from the practice of the most proficient masters of the art; we have a detailed account of the methods of hide-hunters on the buffalo range, more complete than any I know; we have shown to us the inside politics of cattle-rustling and gambling and territorial politics in Arizona as they affected the work of peace officers. John Charles Fremont comes in for some very adverse criticism; and more than one mythical gunman, such as "Doc" Holliday, is brought to life, photograph and all.

If one has any regret, it is that the profanity throughout the book should have been so uniformly washed out and euphemized. Of course, that is all in the tradition of the frontier, an absurdity of our culture which tolerated murder and manslaughter as necessary, but boggled at a naughty word in print. But perhaps even the language of Long John Silver would prove uninspiring, if we were permitted to listen in for long. Yet some spicy speech seems demanded for a book that would present the daring deeds of Western heroes at a time "when there was no law west of Kansas City, and west of Fort Scott, no God."

Stanley Vestal (Walter Stanley Campbell), professor of English at the University of Oklahoma, has carried on extensive research into the history of the West and the Indians of the region. He is the author among other books of "Kit Carson, the Happy Warrior of the Old West."

Six Worthies

NATIVE STOCK. THE RISE OF THE AMERICAN SPIRIT SEEN IN SIX LIVES. By ARTHUR POUND. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1931. $2.50.

Reviewed by WILLIAM MACDONALD

OF the six personages whom Mr. Pound chooses as illustrations of the rise of the American spirit, none, in any reasonable likelihood, would be selected to grace any American Hall of Fame, yet all of them, in widely diverse ways, won in their time something more than ordinary distinction. Of the William Pepperrells whose careers Mr. Pound recounts, Sir William is remembered as the leader of the colonial forces that contributed heavily to the capture of Louisburg from the French; but Pepperrell, although properly honored with a baronetcy and lightly compared by some to Marlborough, was, as Mr. Pound says, "no hero, but merely the commander of an extraordinarily courageous and lucky little army which had achieved the next to impossible, and in so doing had weighted the scales of empire." John Bradstreet deserved well of the colonies for his services in the last French and Indian war, and through his capture of Fort Frontenac paved the way for the fall of New France two years later. Ephraim Williams, killed in the "bloody morning scout" near Lake George, left his estate for a school which shortly became Williams College; but Robert Rogers, scout, frontiersman, and heartless Indian fighter, long celebrated in story for his mythical feat of sliding on snowshoes down the five-hundred-foot face of Roger's Rock, on Lake George, fell into devious ways later as Indian agent and political schemer at Machinac, went over to the British in 1776, and died in poverty in London in 1795.

It was the fate of James Clinton, another of Mr. Pound's worthies, to be overshadowed by his younger brother George, twice Vice-President of the United States, and by his son De Witt, governor of New York and official builder of the Erie Canal. James had a more than creditable record in the Revolutionary War, however, commanded the advance part of the American army on its march to Yorktown peninsula in 1781, and was honored by the selection of his brigade to receive the colors which Cornwallis surrendered.

The most spectacular of Mr. Pound's six was Elkanah Watson. Watson's estimate in 1790 that the population of the United States would reach 133,000,000 in 1930 has often been recalled as a clever piece of calculation, but his romantic career included extraordinarily extensive travel in the United States both before and after the Revolution, a successful business venture in France which the French Revolution blasted, the intimate friendship of Franklin, and a disillusioning encounter with Thomas Paine, whom he found at Nantes "unmistakably foul, loaned him a shirt, and browbeat him into taking a bath by denying" him "a packet of English newspapers until he smelled less like brimstone." On his return to America Watson preached enthusiastically the gospel of canals for New York, of which Governor Clinton was to become the successful apostle, was served with tea by Washington in person while suffering an attack of bronchitis at Mount Vernon, went in for gentleman farming in Berkshire county, Massachusetts, launched the first county fair, and died in peace as late as 1842.

Mr. Pound does not claim that these six lives are exceptional illustrations of stages of national development, but he nevertheless thinks that the attentive reader will discover in them "some of the details of a wide and deep evolution of thought and feeling." The reader will have to be very attentive indeed to make the discovery, or, for that matter, to see in the book anything except what it really is—a well-written, carefully worked, and extremely entertaining collection of biographical sketches of six early Americans who were of some importance in their day.

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Methods of Poetry

HYPNOTIC POETRY. By EDWARD D. SNYDER. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 1930.

THE TECHNIQUE OF ENGLISH VERSE. By GEORGE R. STEWART, JR. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 1930. $1.75.

Reviewed by C. E. ANDREWS

PEOPLE who enjoy poetry are hesitant about reading books on verse rhythm, and the most ardent metrist will not claim that a knowledge of dactyls and cesuras will make you love poetry. But if you enjoy it enough to be curious about it you will find an extremely interesting suggestion in Mr. Snyder's book and the basis for a very stimulating study in Mr. Stewart's.

"Hypnotic Poetry" is a plausible explanation of the spell-weaving effect of a certain rather small group of famous poems when read aloud. Gray's "Elegy," "Kubla Khan," "The Ancient Mariner," "The Isles of Greece," "Annabel Lee," and "Crossing the Bar," have an entirely different effect on an audience from such poems as "My Last Duchess," "The Rape of the Lock," or "The Higher Pantheism." Anyone who has had much experience in reading to a group of people recognizes the special effect which these poems produce, and most of us can recall an almost trance-like experience in listening to some poem well read. And curiously enough, we are often unable to state clearly just what such a poem as "Annabel Lee" means, after we have read it or heard it read. Mr. Snyder has grouped poems on the basis of their spell-weaving effect and tried to determine just what is the underlying difference between the "hypnotic" and the "intellectual" types. He finds by a careful analysis that the spell-weaving poems have all of them a smooth rhythmic perfection, the quality of euphony to an unusual degree, a vagueness of imagery, and an absence of surprise or interruption or of any marked intellectual quality. These things correspond surprisingly to the methods used by medical practitioners in inducing a light hypnotic state. Mr. Snyder quotes from the authoritative books on the subject and makes out a very good case for his parallel. We are actually put into a slight hypnotic trance by listening to these poems.

This theory would have only a limited interest for us, were it not for what it implies. These poems carry their spell-weaving effect to a milder degree even when read silently, and furthermore, there is a large number of poems—most poetry in the language, in fact—which are "semi-hypnotic," that is, hypnotic in some passages and intellectual in others. Most of us will say that now the theory has gone too far. I am inclined to think that the truth of the matter, which has been suggested before, is that all words read rhythmically or heard rhythmically produce an increased emotional susceptibility and a slight dimming of the intellectual faculty. A passage of poetry may give pleasure although only half-understood. The distinction between semi-hypnotic and intellectual poetry, from the point of view of emotional or trance-like effect, seems to me hardly sound. A poem like "My Last Duchess" or "The World is too much with us" may require a preliminary intellectual focussing, but after that it may be read aloud, or silently, with full rhythmic effect and stir the same degree of intense awareness or emotional realization as "To be or not to be" or "Ulysses." Ideas may produce as keen an emotion in many people's minds as images. And then, there is a certain magnetic quality in the voice of some readers, to which part of the spell-weaving may be attributed. I can imagine a Methodist Congregation passing into a trance over the reading of the whole "Rubaiyat" by certain preachers.

"The Technique of English Verse" is written with a great deal of sanity and common sense, rare virtues in a metrist and written by a man with a fine ear for rhythmic effects and an unusual gift for analysis. Mr. Stewart is never satisfied with a mere cataloguing organization, like a filing cabinet full of things that may be of interest to somebody some time. Each special phase of rhythm is presented with the idea of showing the esthetic effect which it may produce. This, of course, is the only intelligent reason for the science of versification. His approach to verse is through the ear, not the eye. The analogy with music is constantly carried out. Mr. Stewart tries to reconcile the "timers" and the "stressers." His reading of verse, I should judge, would avoid the chanting of the one and the prosaic "expression" of the other. He is conscious of the temporal basis, but his discussion is always of the managing of the stresses. He holds that verse may be read as prose, and that some prose may be read with the equal time values of verse. He follows the best modern tendency in considering the distinction between iambic and trochaic of no importance, but merely the result of classical theory.

The most original parts of the book are the chapter on verse in four-four time (dipodic), and that on free verse. Mr. Stewart's contribution to the field, in his previous articles and studies, has been his analysis of the dipodic rhythm, that has become one of the favorites with modern poets, especially Kipling, Masefield, Noyes, Chesterton, and Lindsay. He is one of the first metrists to do more than merely point out the existence of this rhythm. The chapter on free verse is a sensible clarification of a subject that was obscured by irrational poets and by metrists with special theories, until no one knew what to think about it. Mr. Stewart is very scornful of talk about "curves of rhythm" and of "rhythm suited naturally to the subject." At present these terms are merely figures of speech not to be taken seriously.

In general, I wish to recommend the book heartily. In fact, I do not think of any important point on which I should sharply differ with the author. But I find a few things to regret. Perhaps because I am more of a "timer" than Mr. Stewart, I feel that the sense of pattern in verse is so important that more should be made of it by iteration and by varied examples in his first chapter. This would give more point to the detailed discussion of the conflicts with the pattern which take up so much of the book. Naturally, in a study of this kind, some subjects interest the author, and others he puts in merely for completeness. If one considers this as a textbook one wishes Mr. Stewart had not rushed over sonnets and French forms quite so fast, and the chapter on blank verse could be more helpful if all the possible variations that change the character of the type were recapitulated so that one might see just what is meant by the "flexibility" of the form. In view of the work done by the followers of Professor Sievers in the field of pitch rhythm, it seems a little hasty to dismiss the subject as outside the field of metrics. And so with the question of the distribution of time within the measure. The imposing work of William Thomson on the subject and the interesting studies of Professor Croll are hardly to be passed over in a single sentence. Many readers have a rhythmic sense subtle enough to find these musical notations the most interesting approach to the enjoyment of verse. And finally, I do not think Mr. Stewart has contributed much by adding one more system of notation to the jolly diversity already in use. But these are rather personal and perhaps hyper-critical objections. The book is a sound and interesting guide that can make for a quickened appreciation.

Here was a Man

(*Continued from page* 257)

up his figure upon his theory much as a sculptor pastes his clay upon the wood and wire model. The result is a vivid picture of a most remarkable man, a portrait; perhaps more than a portrait, a statue that almost comes to life. It may be the real Roosevelt or not—probably not for no human being can quite conceive himself in another's skin. But it is a figure that will stand until a better one arises, until someone in another decade, taking all the material which has been revealed in the twelve years since Roosevelt's death and the unpublished and undiscovered material which will come out in the next two decades, constructs a new model upon another theory of this strange and powerful creature that dominated America during the first two decades of this century.

The figure of Roosevelt which we have in Mr. Pringle's book stands in the heroic mold. The author has not studied his subject carefully to hate him intelligently. He has enumerated his hero's faults, being careful not to make his hero a plaster saint. He has nicked in his foibles and vanities—and they were many, and those who loved him enjoyed them more than his enemies. In this figure the future historian will see every unpleasant side and angle. Nothing that the future will reveal can disclose more ruthlessly Roosevelt's strong will, his dangerous sense of the dramatic, his keen interest in the opinion of posterity, his narcissian ability to see himself in the possible light of his enemy's eye and then quickly jump aside into a pleasanter attitude, his love of intrigue, his capacity to forgive an opponent and use him with a candor that passes cynicism—all these things Mr. Pringle has molded into the figure that looms out of his book. But he has given us also the other side—the nobility of Roosevelt, his generosity, his impetuous magnanimity, his far-sighted vision in diplomacy. One comes from the Pringle book with a feeling that Roosevelt was of statesmanlike size, that he saw things in the large, that he acted courageously, and that upon the whole and in the main his was an honest life, dedicated to what seemed in that day and with the intelligence of that day the common good, and directed bravely as well as honestly and wisely.

An honest criticism of the book would probably require the statement that Mr. Pringle has telescoped into fifty pages or so Roosevelt's most spectacular and on the whole most important years—from 1912 until his death. Roosevelt's life reached a climax not when he walked down the steps of the White House to ride with President-elect Taft to his inauguration. Rather the big third act came in the Bull Moose movement. There were the fireworks. There, from 1910 to 1916, Roosevelt was revealed in all his strength and in all his weakness, more gorgeously, more terribly and historically, more powerful for what might be called contemporaneous righteousness than in any other time of his career. The Bull Moose party dissolved quickly after the election of 1912. But its momentum kept the Democrats busy until 1917, after which Roosevelt's classic struggle with Wilson from 1915 until 1919 was one of the titanic battles in American public life. Both men stand naked in their strength and their weakness. The history of the world was affected by their attitudes. Mr. Pringle's book had reached 550 pages before he came to the story of the "battle for the Lord." The reader should be thankful for the 550 pages and wait for some other book to complete the story with the same detail, with the same earnest desire to be intelligently honest, that is displayed in this story.

So much is documented about Roosevelt that he seems to have lived a public life for three or four decades with the white light always upon him. The wealth of material is one of the handicaps which anyone carries who writes of Roosevelt. Anecdotes used to spring up in his path. He was a colorful creature, the most highly energized man who has ever sat in the White House, a dynamo in trousers. It is hard, perhaps entirely impossible, to write briefly of him and tell anything like the truth. But this book does reveal a breathing man, out of his background to be sure, somewhat isolated from his time, but there was so much to write that it could not be done with all the pains which Mr. Pringle has used under a thousand pages—from which Heaven forever shield us!

William Allen White, editor of the Emporia Gazette *and one of the leading journalists of America, was one of the outstanding members of the Bull Moose party, and met Roosevelt in both a personal and political relationship.*

A Norwegian correspondent of the London *Observer* writes: "A hitherto unknown drama by Björnstjern Björnson was found recently when some forgotten documents were sorted out. When Björnson died in 1908 all documents belonging to him were sent to his biographer, Professor Christian Collin, of Oslo University. Among the documents was the drama that has now come to light. Professor Collin had probably mislaid it, at least there was no mention of it among the papers found after his death five years ago, and the present discovery was made quite by accident by Björnson's daughter, Mrs. Dagny Björnson Sautreau.

"It is a happy coincidence that the drama was found in time to make it possible to present it during the centennial celebrations to be held in December of next year (Björnson was born on December 8, 1832). The drama was written between 1872 and 1875, and the motive is taken from Norway's medieval history with the two king-brothers, Oystein and Sigurd, as chief characters. The two greatest living authorities on Björnson, Professor Francis Bull, of Oslo, and Professor Lescoffler, of Paris, who have seen the manuscript, agree that the drama is one of the best written by Björnson, full of life and dramatic power."

"Nicolosi Scandurra, the new Virgilian poet, author of I Canti del Poeta Contadino (Milan, Treves), is an authentic peasant working on a small farm near Catania," says the London *Observer*. "For a long time he has improvised verses in the market-place or at local fairs, delighting his countrymen with descriptions of the country and of the pleasures and trials of the working man's life on land or sea.

A Balanced Ration for a Week's Reading

JOB. By JOSEPH ROTH. *Viking.*

The moving story of a simple man, a Jew presented first in his native Poland, then in his adopted America, and sore beset by trials and tribulations.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT. By HENRY F. PRINGLE. *Harcourt, Brace.*

A heroic portrait of a great personality.

MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA. By EUGENE O'NEILL. *Liveright.*

A trilogy playing in a New England seaport town immediately after the Civil War, embodying "A conception of Fate in terms of modern psychology."

The Saturday Review of LITERATURE

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