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# A BOOK ABOUT A WRITER OF BOOKS

## Wells, the Propagandist and Glorified Journalist

WHATEVER else may be said of H. G. Wells, it would probably be admitted by every one that he has one of the most alert, active and interested minds of his generation. It would not be so generally admitted that he is "the Superman in the street," as Sidney Dark, editor of Jack O'London's Weekly, calls him in the subtitle of his book, "An Outline of Wells." (G. P. Putnam's Sons.)  
There is a compliment in this title much more generous than the one in the subtitle. It involves the suggestion that Wells is so big and so varied that it is as futile for any one to write more than an outline of him, as it was for Wells himself to attempt to write more than an outline of history.

Mr. Dark, in his outline, looks on Mr. Wells with much greater approval than Mr. Wells looked on the world in his outline.

INDEED, he not only holds that Mr. Wells has an alert, active and interested mind, but that it is one of the biggest and best minds of the time. No one will deny that it is an unusual mind. Wells could not have risen to his present eminence if he had not possessed great qualities. His origins are of the humbler. His grandfather was head gardener for Lord de Lisle in Kent. His father kept a small shop in London and added to his income by becoming a professional cricket player. His mother was the daughter of a small innkeeper. She had been a lady's maid and when he was twelve years old he became a housekeeper in a large country house. Wells was intended to be a small shopkeeper like his father, but he preferred something else, and through his own exertions obtained an education and began to write.

Mr. Dark remarks that Wells is not a gentleman, meaning in the English sense of the word; and he says that Dickens was not a gentleman, either. He might have gone further and have said that many of the greatest English men of letters were not gentlemen. Shakespeare was the son of a glover-maker. Milton's father was a scrivener. Bunyan was a tinker and the son of a tinker. Johnson's father was a bookseller. Marlowe was the son of a shoemaker, and Meredith the son of a tailor. And the father of Kents kept a livery stable. The English aristocracy, with some notable exceptions, has not been distinguished for its intellectual activities. There was a time when its members could not even read and hired men to do their reading for them.

So Wells is following precedent in England, when, although not a gentleman born, he lifts himself into the aristocracy of intellect.

HE IS still in his prime, and no one can tell what he will yet do. Therefore, Mr. Dark's book will have to be followed at some time in the future by other books attempting to put him in his proper place in the history of English thought. Those books will certainly be written because Wells cannot be ignored, and they will be part of

## SOME RECENT BOOKS

"HURRICANE WILLIAMS," that black-browed, but likable South Sea pirate who always has appeared as the central character in "Savages" and "Wild Blood," now has a book named after him, "Hurricane Williams" (Hobbs Merrill). Gordon Young gives him merely a "walk on part. Although the author of Williams is well throughout the book he makes his appearances only briefly, coming out of the dark sea at opportune moments to set things right when other pirates, bloodthirsty and as ruthless as any who ever sailed the main with Kidd, are becoming a bit too obstreperous.  
Mr. Young's new book can be said to be a good sequel to the others. It has action in every page and its characters are drawn with a fidelity to detail that is surprising. Of course it would not be a young book without a strange heroine and concluding battle that leaves a ship's deck running red with gore. But the reader will be rushing ahead so interestingly that he won't stop to compile a fatality list.

MRS. LEE THAYER goes the usual mystery yarn one better in her latest story, "Q. E. D." (Doubleday, Page & Co.), by making the search for the means of the usual murder more mysterious than the question of the identity of the mysterious criminal. "There is a woman's shriek in the night in a noisy and crowded field a man's body is found, the throat cut and the neck broken. One set of footprints—the victim's—lead to the body. There is no other clue.  
This is a sufficient framework for Mrs. Thayer to build up a mystery tale full of surprises and denouements. Which is more than can be said of many such stories.

THE successful writer of advertisements selects the type in which they are to be printed and arranges the display so that it is as effective as possible. Nevertheless, many advertisements are so badly arranged that they do not yield the returns which they should. Benjamin Sherbo, a typography expert, has published a little book, "Effective Type for Advertising," which should be useful to every advertising writer. Mr. Sherbo, who writes the book as well as publishes it, gives specimens of good typography and bad typography and he explains why the good is good and the bad is bad. The first rule is that the advertisement should attract attention and his second is that it should be easy to read. The rest of his book is elaboration of these two principles.

THE latest volume in the tales of Chekhov which the Macmillans are publishing is entitled "The Cook's Wedding." It is a collection of stories about Russian children, with a sort of burlesque of the famous Sherlock Holmes method added to give variety. The detective story is "The Swedish Match" and tells of the efforts of the London officers to discover who killed a man who had been seen in his own house for several days.

"HOMEWORK and Hobbylores" (Dutton) is the interesting record of the results of some novel pedagogy instituted in the George School, Cambridge, England, by the principal, H. Caldwell Cook, who edits this book. He was the pioneer in England in teaching the play method of composition, and judged by the poems his scheme is both practical and fruitful. It contains a selection of verses written by lads between the ages of ten and fourteen. Several of them are carols which have been satisfactorily set to music. The method makes very definite, and the evidence is convincing, for close capacity for observation, both of natural objects and scenes and the routine of daily life. It also has a set of notes on the developing tunefulness of ear in the pupils who are fortunate enough to come under its influence.



H. G. WELLS  
A cartoon of the novelist from John O'London's Weekly

## RHYTHMICAL FOOLING

An Entertaining Anthology of English and American Vers de Societe

Whoever likes rhythmical fooling will find much pleasure in turning over the pages of "The Little Game of Society Verse" (Houghton Mifflin Company), compiled by Claude M. Fuess and Harold C. Stearns. The title does not give the correct impression of the contents of the volume, for "society verse" in English connotes several different shades of meaning from that contained in the French "vers de societe," of which the phrase purports to be a translation.

The editors of the volume have selected a pretty taste in their selections. Starting with John Donne and Shakespeare and ending with Sara Fuller and Charles C. Clarke they have included typical light verse coming within this classification. Of course, Calverley is represented, and Austin Dobson, and Fraed, and London, and Moore. Two pieces by Kipling appear and two by S. Weir Mitchell. One of the Mitchell poems is "An Old Man to an Old Madeira." Frederick Locker-Lampson is represented by seven pieces, Robert Louis Stevenson, William Moore Story and Swinburne by one each. In all, about seventy-five different writers have been drawn on to fill the volume of 350 pages.

The book has for a preface an interesting essay on vers de societe based on the dictum of Brander Matthews that such verse should be distinguished by "brevity, brilliancy and buoyancy" and admitting that Horace set the pattern on which there has been no improvement. There are three indexes, one of titles, another of first lines and the last of authors.

## NEW BOOKS

General

TEN YEARS AT THE COURT OF SAINT JAMES. By James H. M. Dutton & Co. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co.

THE ENORMOUS ROOM. By E. E. Cummings. Boston: D. C. Heath & Co.

THE HISTORY OF SOCIAL LIFE. By Robert M. Lynd. New York: D. C. Heath & Co.

THE LIFE OF DONALD G. MITCHELL. By Charles Scribner's Sons. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

THE DARK HOUSE. By I. A. Wylie. New York: D. C. Heath & Co.

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All these discriminating reviewers find fault with the author for failing to reach perfection and to produce a modern classic, but at the same time all three do admit that this is probably the finest novel yet published in 1922.

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WEAVER in The Brooklyn Eagle: "'Lilia Chenoweth' is one of the finest books of the year. . . . quite adequate were he trying merely to turn out a good yarn. . . . The book is far and away above the usual run."  
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Author of "The Pilgrim of a Smile"

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By ALGERNON BLACKWOOD

Author of "Julius Le Vallon," "The Wolves of God," etc.

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