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Books

in a two-dimensional world of dreams illumined by the glare of his hot faith in science, and running off into the flat, stale Utopias which have haunted his dreams since *The Days of the Comet*.

The Autocracy of Mr. Parham is a reiteration of the old Wellsian formula in the guise of a fantastic romance. It is hardly necessary to repeat that formula. The new discoveries of men in the realm of science, he believes, have upset the traditions of history. The lid is off, and anyone can look into the stew who wants to. His own version of it he has presented in *The Outline of History*. The claims of nationalism, he believes, have been thrown into the discard with the melting of world frontiers and boundaries by the modern scientific inventions of radio, telephone, and rapid transit. Science, in other words, has created a new world and left us still groping for readjustment.

There is, of course, just sufficient plausibility in this vision to make it, on the surface, acceptable. In those days, a score or more years ago, when the world stood rubbing its eyes in the glare of its new inventiveness and when Mr. Wells

with Mr. Parham in his dream as in real life, to check him. The duel between Mr. Parham, the *bête noire* of the Wellsian historical revisions, and Sir Bussy, the new man of Mr. Wells' dispensation, forms the body of the story in the course of which the European and American continents are drawn into a war of extermination which dies out, strangely enough, on the ash-bed of American idealism in a super-Wilsonian message from the American president to the world.

The Autocracy of Mr. Parham is as incredible a performance as it was intended to be, but worse than that, it is a pretentious and futile one. Mr. Wells suffering under the Messianic delusion has become a more interesting spectacle than his books. There is no lack here of the old Wellsian touch which could breathe enthusiastic life into minor details of characterization. But the attempt to catch the spirit and meaning of life within the terms of a scientific formula is just as repellant as the classical idealism against which Mr. Wells inveighs. In knocking the high silk hat off his dummy he substitutes a dunce's cap, and the exchange is more ludicrous than profitable.

Parade of Morals

MRS. GRUNDY, by Leo Markun; Appleton, \$5.00.

Reviewed by FRANCES WARFIELD.

THINGS I Never Knew Till Now:

That Michelangelo's "Last Judgment" was once made respectable by the addition of painted drawers. . . . That the orang-outang in the Boston zoo once wore a breech-clout. . . . That in the 1840's the legs of the piano in a ladies' seminary in America were fitted with ruffled trousers. . . .

That in Victoria's day, it took twelve yards of serge to make a decent English-woman's bathing-suit. . . . That in the early Nineteenth Century well-fed Philadelphia he-men wore whalebone corsets, while in New York gentlemen complained that the sight of feminine ankles was no longer a treat. . . .

That smoking was once thought necessary as a safeguard against the plague. . . . That in the 1850's the best American people bathed but once or twice a year. . . . That Lady Hamilton, whom Lord Nelson admired, started her career as a demonstrator of wonder-working mud baths. . . .

A historically-minded Walter Winchell might stretch the list indefinitely by close study of Leo Markun's biography of Mrs. Grundy. To the rest of us, the book offers an opportunity, without too much library work, to know Mrs. Grundy better. To know her, that is, for a flustered, illogical, hypocritical, sly, amusing, old ostrich



H. G. WELLS

had just begun his career as a scientific romanticist, it was even more plausible still. But the salt of Mr. Wells' wisdom has lost its savor in the modern spectacle of disillusionment, which is the simple and normal reaction of thoughtful people to a mechanized world. Whether science, ultimately, will justify a small remaining hope or continue to raise Franksteins as it did in the last war, is still an open question. But the relation between the telephone and radio and brotherly love is still as much a mystery of the Wells' *patois* as it was to begin with. And the white robed Messiah of *Ann Veronica*, *Marriage*, and *The New Machiavelli* has come of late to present the spectacle of a small fat boy crying among a litter of empty jam pots.

There is nothing new about Mr. Wells' newest vision. His taste for the sweet and toothsome thought is as abnormal as ever. He has it out with his old ghost of formal history in the person of Mr. Parham who, in a dream, becomes the autocrat and dictator of England. He supports his own version of things in the mundane, inelegant, and sawed-off person of Sir Bussy Woodcock who exists side by side

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