

## War Guilt

I SEEK THE TRUTH: A BOOK ON RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE WAR. By the EX-CROWN PRINCE WILLIAM OF GERMANY. Translated from the German by Ralph Butler. New York: J. H. Sears & Company. 1926. \$4.

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THE discussion of responsibility for the Great War is no longer reserved to politicians and historians. The former German Emperor made some observations on the subject in his memoirs, and now his son has entered the lists. Probably the immediate purpose is to vindicate the fallen dynasty in the eyes of the German people, who held the Crown Prince in high esteem before the war and have shown little animosity towards him since the revolution. But in the outside world the royal author always passed for an apostle of militarism, and he can scarcely have imagined that his book would be accepted abroad as an unprejudiced account. His book: it is of course quite possible that the Prince really wrote it; but from beginning to end it reads like the work of some foreign expert who is accustomed to handling diplomatic documents and can argue points in the professional jargon.

The volume is best described as a lawyer's brief in reply to the accusation contained in the famous Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles, which is interpreted to mean that Germany was solely responsible for the war and that she intentionally provoked it. Of course, few students now accept either of these propositions, so that in a sense the Crown Prince is flogging a dead horse; but as long as the article is allowed to stand in the Treaty Germans will continue to protest against it. Prince William, however, is not content with this; as a soldier he believes in the doctrine of the offensive-defensive. Accordingly he not only denies that Germany is guilty, but throws the responsibility directly upon Russia and France. The "revisionist" theory is, in short, developed with little or no reservation.

First of all, it must be shown that Prussia was to blame for the war of 1870. So "the assertion that Bismarck was behind the candidature of Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern for the Spanish throne" is declared to be "at variance with plain historical facts;" his edited version of the Ems telegram gave an "entirely correct" picture of what had happened; the policy of Napoleon III had the "support of the whole of the French people." The Crown Prince should read what the German historian, Alfred Stern, in the last volume of his great "Geschichte Europas" has to say about Bismarck's share in bringing on the war. It is also argued that France declared war because of King William's refusal at Ems to give the guarantees demanded; whereas in fact the French Government had decided to accept the King's assurances as satisfactory and resolved on war only after the publication of the Ems telegram.

For the main body of his argument the Crown Prince adopts the method of attacking the assertions of two French writers, MM. Emile Bourgeois and Georges Pagès, whose "Origines et Responsabilités de la Grande Guerre" may be regarded as a semi-official statement of the French case, for it was first presented as a report to the French Senate. They contend that from 1871 to 1914 German policy aimed at the hegemony of Europe; that Bismarck would not have hesitated to use force to achieve his object and that William II deliberately resorted to war for that purpose. All this, and the innocence of France, they establish, to their own satisfaction, with the aid of unpublished correspondence from the archives of the Quai d'Orsay. The Crown Prince proceeds to confute them, to his satisfaction, by liberal quotations from the documents of the Wilhelmstrasse recently published under the title of "Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette." An engaging picture! As if what German diplomatists thought about French policy is any more convincing than what French ambassadors reported about German ambitions. But he is on sound ground when he analyzes German policy on the basis of German documents, and he has no trouble in showing up the exaggerations and contradictions of MM. Bourgeois and Pagès. On many points he makes out a strong case which historians will probably accept.

Nevertheless one frequently feels that Prince

William doth protest too much. Thus his efforts to exculpate Bismarck for the "war scare" of 1875 and the Schnaebeli incident of 1887 will not altogether satisfy those who have probed those difficult and complicated questions. He prefers not to discuss the wisdom of Prince Bülow's Moroccan policy, as if that policy did not profoundly affect the conduct of France in later years. He states that "neither the Emperor nor the Chancellor wanted territorial acquisitions in Morocco." The Emperor certainly did not, and told King Alfonso so—much to the disgust of the German foreign office which certainly did desire a share of Morocco ("Grosse Politik," vol. 17, nos. 5200, 5209; vol. 20, no. 6481); in March 1905, Bülow instructed his representative in Tangier that Germany's policy was "to keep the future open" ("Grosse Politik," vol. 20, np. 6582). We are also asked to believe that it was the French army law of 1872 which "began the competition in armaments of the European peoples after 1871." Most persons would say that it was the maintenance by Germany of her principle of conscription which forced her neighbors to follow her example.

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It is hardly necessary to remark that the Crown Prince attributes the worst motives to the diplomatic group ranged against Germany. For France the alliance with Russia "had never been anything else but a means of enabling her to seize the first opportunity" for recovering Alsace-Lorraine: strangely enough the language of the treaty provides for a strictly defensive alliance. "The Triple Entente wanted a peace which restricted the freedom of Germany's movements;" it is curious then that the Entente should accept the Bagdad Railway (incidentally, the Crown Prince never discusses Germany's Near Eastern policy), and that Great Britain should be accommodating about African territories in the agreement of June, 1914. Throughout, the *leitmotiv* is that "all the Great Powers except Germany had desires which could only be satisfied by war." This admits a good deal about Germany's allies, and the Crown Prince tries to repudiate Germany's responsibility for those clauses of the Triple Alliance which sanctioned sinister Italian ambitions at the expense of France by saying that they were added in 1887 "not for the sake of German interests at all, but in the interests of Italy." This is not altogether true, for Italy refused to renew the alliance without them, and the existing situation in European politics made the renewal desirable in the interests of Germany and Austria. Similarly the reasoning to prove, anent the German Emperor's efforts during the Russo-Japanese war to organize a Continental coalition, that "the position of Great Britain in the world would not have been shaken by such a coalition," seems decidedly specious.

The last chapters set forth the now familiar charge of Izvolski and M. Poincaré plotting for war, and the great crisis of 1914 is treated as the *dénouement* of the grand conspiracy. The Crown Prince says that he need not "give proofs of the fact that the German Emperor and the German Government, or for that matter the German people, endeavored during July, 1914, to prevent and not to provoke war." It might be difficult to do so; unless one is prepared to ignore, as the Crown Prince does, such little matters as the Potsdam consultations, the encouragement to Austria to go ahead recklessly, the refusal for many days of many proposals for mediation, the ultimatum to Belgium drafted before any declaration of war. It is very convenient to pass over these things and concentrate on Germany's belated efforts to restrain Austria, and to denounce the Russian mobilization without mentioning in connection with it the Austrian declaration of war against Serbia. But such a method of dealing with tragic events creates in the minds of well-informed readers, not a conviction of Germany's innocence, but a feeling that the writer is either insincere or incompetent.

There is no little merit in this book, parts of which are honestly and convincingly written. But it exhibits in full measure that incapacity to see the other side which distinguished German diplomacy before and during the war; it omits anything and everything not favorable to Germany; it attempts to prove not only that Germany was not solely responsible for the war, but that she was not responsible at all. One wonders when the Germans will recognize that such tactics only defeat themselves, for they simply postpone the revision of the verdict of unique German responsibility. The

French and the British will not, and in good conscience cannot, admit that they and the Russians bear all the blame. From the diplomatic point of view, the war arose from the conflict of alliances, and it was Germany who inaugurated the system. (The methods of German diplomacy caused everywhere suspicion and sometimes fear.) Nationalism, which in the opinion of many was the ultimate cause, was as strong in Germany as elsewhere. Without German support Austria's provocative Balkan policy could never have been undertaken. The Germans have a case for revision, and a good one, but if, by overstating it, they insist upon a whitewashing, they are chasing a shadow.

## Reminiscences

ALL SUMMER IN A DAY: An Autobiographical Fantasia. By SACHEVERELL SITWELL. New York. George H. Doran. 1926. \$3.50.

TAR, A MID-WESTERN CHILDHOOD. By SHERWOOD ANDERSON. New York. Boni and Liveright. 1926. \$3.

Reviewed by ARTHUR COLTON

MISS REBECCA WEST in a recent review of Mr. Sacheverell Sitwell's "All Summer in a Day" assures us that "neither the importance of the Sitwells as a group nor of Mr. Sacheverell Sitwell as an individual can well be exaggerated,—they are among the few illuminants England possesses—the legatees of perhaps the most glorious group that English life has produced, the Whig aristocracy of the eighteenth century, the society that received Voltaire."

Personally I am unable to see this luminous importance. Miss West's own writings seem to me of more interest than those of any of the Sitwells. Her reference to the inheritance of "a graceful intellectual carriage" from ancestors among the early Whig aristocracy is unintentionally helpful, for it suggests that the vogue of the Sitwells in London is perhaps as much social as literary. One is tempted to imagine with what brutal couplet the literary idol of the same Whig aristocracy, that spitfire of poetry, Alexander Pope, might have caricatured "the graceful intellectual carriage" of its legatees. It was after all a plain spoken and forthright generation of very little patience with preciosity.

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Taken merely as a "stunt," an experiment in the fashion of Marcel Proust, "All Summer in a Day" is of course a clever piece of work. There are even two figures in it, elderly people, Colonel Fahmstock and Miss Morgan, lifted into more or less definite visibility to remind one of the unforgettable Swan and Charlus and the De Guermentes. The creations of Proust seem to stand out the more sharply for the sinuous, shifting background of the story and the style. His workmanship is marvellous, but one wonders if it is not perhaps a disastrous thing to imitate. In the Proustian recovery of childhood, the child's mind and that of the sophisticated searcher "du temps perdu" are somehow blended. But with Mr. Sitwell they seem less blended than confused. If one reaches the end with the impression that it is rather a dull book, the dullness may perhaps be one's own; or perhaps Mr. Sitwell's mind is not yet—he is only, I believe, twenty-five—creative enough to write the book he intended. His attitude seems a little self-conscious, as if he were saying *sotto voce* "See how much and how beautifully I can write about almost nothing." But the beauty is not extraordinary and the substance is extremely thin.

All this sounds irritated, and it is not nice to show one's irritation. I was reading two other reminiscent books at about the same time, Mr. Llewelyn Powys's "Verdict of Bridle-goose" and Mr. Sherwood Anderson's "Tar;" and found Mr. Sitwell wearisome, Mr. Powys quite the reverse, and Mr. Anderson less interesting than in his "Note Book," published about a year ago. The two latter are plain spoken and forthright men, whose lives have been varied and reaching down near the bedrocks of human experience. Probably they indispose one to appreciate Mr. Sitwell's tenuous technique.

It is not impossible to become irritated also with Mr. Anderson's persistently jerky sentences, with his unselected colloquialism, and even with the dragging in of more unsavory detail than seems to have any value. But such a chapter in "Tar" as the death in the forest of old Mrs. Grimes is too much for petulance. It may not be good style, and yet the casual manner of it has something to do with its eventual



power. The characters of Tar's mother and sister are drawn with few lines, two or three incidents and some passing comments, but they are, as vital, as indelible, and true, as the portrait of Tar's father which is drawn at length and returned to again and again.

"Truth," says Mr. Anderson in his "Foreward," speaking of the autobiographical element in "Tar," "Truth is impossible to me." It was always so. He never could tell it. As a small boy, if he saw a cow it would become a bear before he could get home with the recollection.

I do not remember the face of my own father. My wife is in the next room but I do not remember what she looks like. My wife is to me an idea; my mother, my sons, are ideas. My fancy is a wall between myself and truth. There is a world of fancy into which I constantly plunge and out of which I seldom completely emerge. I want every day to be absorbingly interesting and exciting to me, and if it will not, I, with my fancy, try to make it so. If you, a stranger, come into my presence, there is a chance that for a moment I shall see you as you are, but in another moment you will be lost. You say something and I am off.

He was born a teller of tales and all such are liars.

There is enough of this in most of us for a recognition of its truth. But the degree in which Mr. Anderson finds himself controlled by their tyrannous faculty—he calls it "a disease"—is perhaps why we have come to see in him a man quite apart from other (so called) "middle western realists."

## The Dark Ages Revived

THE HISTORY OF WITCHCRAFT AND DEMONOLOGY. By MONTAGUE SUMMERS. (The History of Civilization.) New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1926.

Reviewed by S. FOSTER DAMON

THIS book is particularly difficult to discuss as it is written from the theological, rather than the historical or scientific, point of view. The Reverend Montague Summers plants the banner of his Church, opens his artillery of Church Fathers, and defies attack. Anything they believed, he believes. Anything that confirms them must be true; anything that imperils their position is hardly to be mentioned; such seems to be his sole standard of reliability. Consequently, old ballad or early drama, *symboliste* novel and post-Eliphaz-Levi reveries are gravely cited as sound evidence.

The result is that the author accepts all the ancient superstitions, not as an enlightened psychiatrist, but absolutely according to the wildest beliefs of the past centuries. He swallows even the traditional broomsticks, supporting his belief with instances of the recorded levitations of mediums and saints. Satanists and their Black Masses apparently are as real to him as the Red or Catholic Menaces to various sectors of our enlightened country. Sabbats still take place, we are told in terrified whispers.



As a history, then, this book is pure propaganda. The turning-point and death of the tale of witchcraft goes unmentioned; partly because the author takes the stand that there was no turning point, and partly, one suspects, because it was entirely Protestant. We refer to the Salem scare. After the customary panic, the populace came to its senses in a sufficiently dramatic way to turn the tide in Europe. Cotton Mather's rejection of "spectral evidence," a threatened law-suit, the public repentance of Judge Sewall and his jury, Calef's book,—all these woke New England from the delusion; and New England's action came just at the psychological moment for Europe to accept the new attitude. Yet Salem does not even appear in the Reverend Summers's index!

Under the heading of "Diabolic Possession" we hear of the horrors of Spiritism. A characteristic sentence reads: "That Spiritism opens the door to demoniac possession, so often classed as lunacy, is generally acknowledged by all save the prejudiced and superstitious." The Reverend Doctor never argues questions; he always dismisses them as long since settled, with a few more words of pitying but unsparing contempt for his opponents.

Consequently one must feel that this book, for all its enormous bibliography, is ill-digested and prejudiced, and even dangerous insofar as it tends to reestablish superstitions and evil practices long since out of fashion.

## The Road to Success

ALL HAVE A FINE FUNERAL. By PIERRE DE LA MAZIÈRE. Translated by Jacques Le Clercq. New York: Brentano's. 1927. \$2.

Reviewed by ELMER DAVIS

"I HAVE been young and now am old," said the Psalmist, "yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, or his seed begging bread;" thereby demonstrating a capacity for selective vision that would have qualified him to write a book on the benefits of the Eighteenth Amendment. Mr. Pierre de la Mazière (the accent is not guaranteed, for the publishers print it alternately grave and acute to avoid invidious discriminations) seems to hold that the righteous is always forsaken and that wickedness is the sure road to prosperity. It is a little difficult for some of us to find in the universe evidence of that ordered purpose which is implied by either of these views; but Mr. de la Mazière's doctoring of the evidence does not greatly matter unless you choose, somewhat needlessly, to regard his novel as a political-economic pamphlet.

Read merely as one man's story it has a burning nervous effectiveness, materially assisted by Mr. Jacques Le Clercq's smooth and racy translation. The narrator was left an orphan at fifteen by poor but honest parents who had taught him to be modest, industrious, and frugal, to do always a little more than the boss expected. These virtues, so admired of Mr. John Wanamaker and others, he practised dutifully for twenty-five years, first as a furniture dealer's delivery boy, then as a bank clerk. What he learned in this period was that to get anywhere you must "go in the right door;" with the further corollary, independently discovered already by Mr. Ford Madox Ford, that some do and some do not.

For all around him he saw stupid men, incompetent men, dishonest men, succeeding where virtue and industry obtained no reward; till at last a glimpse of the magnificent funeral of an ex-Premier who notoriously owed his riches to the Panama scandal made him forget the principles learned at his mother's knee, and look for his own chance. It came; he stole fifty thousand francs; he speculated with it, more successfully than the embezzlers one reads about in the papers, but his success is explained quite satisfactorily. It would be unfair to the author to give away the last few steps of our hero's rise to the top, but it may be said that he consolidated his success by cashing in on the discovery that the insiders, whatever their quarrels among themselves, generally stand together against the outsiders.

Possibly the author thought (as do, evidently, some of his admirers) that he was drawing up an indictment of capitalist society. Certainly his account of French political and business morality as rotten through and through must be uncomfortable reading for the patriot. But his polemic is more effective against the virtues of the petite bourgeoisie than the vices of the haute bourgeoisie. Our hero was born, or at any rate educated by his meek parents, with a slave mentality; he thought duty and industry alone were sufficient to bring material reward. One might suppose that observation would have led him to doubt this in a much shorter period than twenty-five years. As for the star witness in his prosecution of the social order, Auguste Fourest, the brilliant man who remained a poorly paid bank clerk—why, Fourest had the bad luck to be working for one of those great organizations which are so successful that they regard success as automatic and have a prejudice against promotions from the ranks. There are plenty of them, and plenty of others. Even in the more crowded European societies where opportunity is less frequent than here, such a man could be kept down only by his own shortcomings. And that was precisely what did keep him down; he wanted to change his job but his aged mother, proud of his position in a big bank, made him promise never to go anywhere else. No Utopist has yet proposed a social order so fool-proof as to take care of a man like that.

No, Mr. de la Mazière's defendant is not a social-economic order of two or three centuries' standing, but a biochemic order coeval with Life itself. His complaint is that biological inheritances are as unequal as property inheritances; his indictment lies not against capitalism but against the universe. He argues his case powerfully; but suppose the universe attempts no defense and merely pleads guilty, what are you going to do about it?

This aspect of the book is beside the point, what-

ever the author may think. Its merits, and they are very considerable, are the merits of creative art. The book is alive, the people are alive: the narrator, Fourest, the other clerks (notably the one who drugged himself with opera as some men do with morphine); and there is a fiery bitter passion that sweeps the reader along. If Mr. de la Mazière has not known poverty, and the acrid smart of envy at unjust inequality, then he has an extraordinary talent for accurate inference. Whether or not he has drawn modern French business as it is, he convinces you that this is the way it must seem to the particular man he is writing about. Which, after all, is the business of the novelist.

## Veridical Tales

DREADS AND DROLLS. By ARTHUR MACHEN. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1926. \$3.50.

Reviewed by H. THORNTON CRAVEN

ARTHUR MACHEN'S regard for the "human various" is as keen as Mr. Venus's if somewhat more elegant. In "Dreads and Drolls," the skill of Dickens's immortal taxidermist is transferred to the imagination. Mr. Machen rummages among the dry bones of musty records, among anecdotal fragments, neglected personalia. He articulates and quickens them and they emerge with sensitive and haunting appeal in a charming volume. The assembled tales and reflection—twenty-nine of them—appeared in the London *Graphic*, gathered from all sources. "Most of them," states the author, "are strictly veridical, but it must be confessed that here and there imagination plays a small part."

If this be so, then the transmuting process has been accomplished by an extremely subtle, yet compelling art. There is decidedly less of the cryptic in these sketches, which do not aim to be pretentious, than in the now almost classic work, "The Hill of Dreams," with which the author first attracted attention more than a decade ago. Mr. Machen has not renounced mystery and legend. He rejoices in them, especially when evanescent or unresolved. In the present volume he reverts affectionately to the two modern fables that are obviously his favorites, "The Angels of Mons" and the tale of the Russian troops in England in 1914. The citations are merely incidental, but they display the writer's esteem for unfinished chords of romance.

The assumption of realism in "Dreads and Drolls" is particularly artful, since, amid all the accompanying documentation, it is palpably Mr. Machen's purpose to touch the springs of fancy. The contact is established by the mechanism of restraint and delicate quietude of style. The most bizarre and prodigious happenings are presented with a Hardyean "emphasis of understatement," craftily stimulating to the reader's sense of wonder.

It must be insisted at once that not the slightest kinship with Dunsany is implied. Mr. Machen is strolling through quite a different gallery. Throughout this collection of brief "pieces," which in other hands would have become merely fugitive, Mr. Machen lovingly reveals the Dickens complex. The pages are dotted with references to the novels and many delectable excerpts are quoted in considerable extent.

The Dickens bent emerges immediately in the book in the two cunningly told stories drawn from the adventures of Joseph Grimaldi, whose life was edited by the budding "Boz." These are tales of extraordinary occurrences, whose mysteries Mr. Machen does not attempt to solve, delighting meanwhile in his inability. It is no wonder that the author in his foreword indicates a preference for "The Man with the Silver Staff" and "The Long-Lost Brother." They are little gems of polished art. The inner beat and refinement of prose accent of certain passages of the book recall a Max Beerbohm, pruned of acidity and extreme artifices,—the Beerbohm of "The Golden Drugget." There is a glimpse of James Stephens and, judging by the close, a conscious one, in the fantasy, "The Little People." Yet despite these echoes and the legacy of assigned personal journalism that cling to some of the productions, the distinctive Machen quality abides. In the main "Dreads and Drolls" is literature, graceful and sensitive, wise in its humor, its fancy, romance, and somber implications. It may urge some intensely contemporary Georgian readers toward Dickens. It should urge strangers to Machen to explore him further. "Uncommercial Traveler" is merely one of his parts.