

## - BOOK REVIEW -

### THE ANATOMY OF FRUSTRATION

By H. G. Wells (The MacMillan Company)

(Reviewed by George Gillespie, M.A.)

With a venerable reputation for social and political prophecy and for accounts of imaginary worlds, H. G. Wells here gives a rapid but painstaking epitome of an imaginary book. A scholarly American businessman, William Burroughs Steele, living in retirement in the south of France, says Chapter one, investigates the ways in which human beings are mistaken or miserable or defeated. The first eleven volumes (and some odd fragments) of his "Anatomy of Frustration" are the result.

Left unfinished at Steele's sudden death, this portentously thorough dissection of all the ills that flesh is heir to is really a survey of all the problems, religious, political and social, that confront our race. It is more than this. Profoundly dissatisfied with all previous solutions, he works out his own. He will show the way to abolish the frustration he so exhaustively anatomizes. Success and happiness is at long last within the reach of sorely harassed mankind.

First source of frustration Mr. Wells' imaginary thinker confronts is philosophy or religion—the different conceptions of things in general that mankind has elaborated to explain the world and human life. Three pages later we learn that they have all collapsed under his searching analysis. The religion of the Australian Bushman, the world-view of St. Thomas Aquinas and the critical philosophy of Kant, all lie in ruins, implies Mr. Wells, before the onslaughts of this retired executive.

And here something might be said about Mr. Wells's device of presenting his own thought from behind the impressive bulk of the mythical Steele. We know, for Mr. Wells tells us, that all previous belief and speculation on God and the world and the end of life have been weighed in some sort of balance and found in some way wanting. But regarding the processes that end in this world-convulsing, but rather vaguely stated result, we are left com-

pletely in the dark. Mr. Wells vouches for the force of the arguments; he has no space in which to tell us what they are. Reducing a dozen fat volumes to a readable little book of 217 pages demands quite a bit of cutting.

The book moves on with the discovery that all this welter of theories and creeds, promising as they do some sort of immortality, is susceptible of a biological explanation—"that any conscious animal whose intelligence rises to the level, of apprehending death, must necessarily set about a research for some sort of immortality." The awareness of death being thus a universal frustration, Steele proceeds to outline his own theory for abolishing it. Personal immortality having been dismissed as impossible and unimaginable, he turns to the lesser immortality, which comes through identification with a group of organization that persists though its individual members drop away—what he calls "merger immortality." This he fixes on as the quietus for the human horror of dissolution:

"He believes that there is no truly rational objective, no sound and sure merger-immortality, enduring and satisfying and practicable, for any intelligent human being, except through a thorough-going self identification with the human will and intelligence considered as a synthesis of the will-drives and the mental-drives of the entire species."

The explanation offered for this formula confirms our suspicions that it is little more than a modern restatement of the Positivism of Auguste Comte, the "Religion of Humanity," which was one of Europe's many unsuccessful attempts to find the basis for human universalism and co-operation in human nature itself. Among the opinions that Mr. Wells seems to have overlooked is that widely experienced sentiment that Catholic theology expresses in the doctrine of the Fall of Man.

It is to a world state, socialistic, science directed and peaceful that the program filling most of the rest of the book points. Such a universal society is the only environment in which all the frustrations that beset poor mortals will be removed.

But while this book strikes one as superficial and frivolous, it does not attempt to minimize the seriousness of the problems to which it suggests solutions. It is here, in fact, that "The Anatomy of Frustration," has saddened at least one reader. Lucid and intelligent, the author

spares us no detail in depicting the plight of the modern world. Etched against that picture of gigantic and overwhelming disorder, the remedies he offers seem all the more insufficient.

#### FOREIGNERS AREN'T FOOLS

Christopher Hollis. (Sheed and Ward)

(Reviewed by Vincent Connolly, '37)

"England is right and the rest of the world is wrong" in regard to international questions, is the opinion of most British subjects. They have believed too readily what is in newspapers where the English point of view is given and, as a result, have become prejudiced against foreigners.

Christopher Hollis, in this book, attempts to give a question unbiased consideration. He is well qualified to give us the foreigners' point of view because he has spent a year travelling in Europe. All his information is obtained from reliable sources; he has read English and foreign newspapers. The arguments used are those of contemporary statesmen.

The book is written in the popular question and answer style. Its setting is a transatlantic liner on which happen to be an Englishman, an Italian, a German, a Russian, a Japanese, and an American. The Englishman is cast for the role of "the man who keeps the conversation going." He discusses foreign policies with these representatives of various countries, showing the basis of the distrust and disagreement among nations.

Hollis shows that there are two sides to every question and that a foreigner can put forth just as strong an argument as an Englishman; that we should not condemn the Italians for interfering in Ethiopia until we have heard their side of the argument; that we should not blame the Germans for repudiating their debts to the United States until we know the reason for their doing so. It is certain that there is only a very small minority of Englishmen which has any notion what are the arguments by which intelligent foreigners defend their policies.

Many questions such as: Why was it necessary for Germany to have a man such as Hitler? How do the Germans justify their occupation of the Rhineland? How do the Communists aim to spread Communism? What is the value of Colonies?—are answered in this book.

In short it gives an understanding of the present day international situation and should help to break down national prejudices.

---

IN THE STEPS OF ST. PAUL

H. V. Morton. (Dodd, Mead & Co.)

(Reviewed by C. McQuaid, '39)

Those who have read Mr. Morton's "In The Steps of the Master" will welcome its sequel, "In the Steps of St. Paul." Once again we are taken to Jerusalem, and from that point follow the Apostle of the Gentiles in his four missionary journeys.

Our travels carry us north, via Damascus to Tarsus, the birth place of St. Paul. In a cargo boat we sail to Cyprus, where we explore certain ancient ruins, once proud cities of St. Paul's acquaintance. Returning to the mainland, we follow the Apostle through Turkey; embark for Mitylene and thence to the coast of Macedonia, where St. Paul first set foot in Europe.

At Athens we are presented with a view of the Acropolis, and the ancient city itself. The Archeological excavations at Corinth are visited; after a short call at Ephesus, we return to a Carmelite Hospice in Palestine. We seek out the Caesarea of Herod the Great and then take a ship for Malta, thence to Naples. The Journey is very fittingly ended at the tomb of St. Paul in Rome.

The book is written in the usual easy prose of Mr. Morton. Not only does he give us the picture as it stands today, but rebuilds it as it must have appeared to St. Paul. He begins each chapter with a brief account of that missionary's relations with the places about to be visited, weaving the Epistles into their appropriate background. Local folklore, history, and legend are all presented in a manner which make such digressions seem as part of the main theme. The author adds his characteristically human touches by vividly describing trivial incidents which happen along the way.

Enthusiastic followers of Mr. Morton's previous works will hail this one as his greatest, and place it with their collection of frequently read books. Those who are as yet unacquainted with that master of travel books will find "In the Steps of St. Paul" a most suitable introduction.

## NOT UNDER FORTY

By Willa Cather. (Alfred A. Knopf.)

(Reviewed by A. P. Campbell)

This is a book of reminiscences and literary criticisms. Miss Cather explains the title: it will not, she says, have much appeal for persons under forty years of age. But she is wrong, all who have met Father Latour and Lucy Gayheart will enjoy her neatly-finished portraits, and those who interest themselves in creative writing will find wisdom in her pronouncements on that art.

The tone of the reminiscences is calm and easy, but in "The Novel Demouble"—which belongs to an earlier period—we find her more vigorous, more assertive. Some of its passages are surprisingly sharp for the usually mild Willa. She straightway launches an attack against the exaggerated realism of the modern novelists. Balzac himself comes under her censure, Balzac, who "tried to reproduce on paper the actual city of Paris." She condemns the laboratory study of characters, the over-emphasizing of physical emotion. "Can one imagine anything more terrible than the story of Romeo and Juliet rewritten in prose by D. H. Lawrence?"

"A Chance Meeting" is an account of the author's meeting with Madame Gout, favoured niece of Gustave Flaubert. This essay contains a store of gossip about the literary giants of a past generation. Here is Flaubert himself, whom the author admires; and Balzac again, whom Flaubert considered "as ignorant as a pot"; and Marcel Proust, whom Madame Gout discards as "trop dur et trop fatigant."

But in all this the interest is in the restless old Madame herself, for however much she may become a critic, Willa Cather is first and always an artist, a painter of personalities. We find this in all her reminiscences, they are well sprinkled with criticism, but we remember the writer rather than what he wrote. We are not especially impressed by the fact that Katherine Mansfield wrote well, that certain of her works are rich in art; what concerns us most is that she is dying in London, so fearfully young and so terribly homesick.

It is altogether an interesting book, the work of a clear-sighted critic and a genuine artist.