

The Open Conspiracy

Sociology

H. G. WELLS in *The Open Conspiracy* (Doubleday, Doran, \$2):

The conspiracy that Mr. Wells has opened is that he intends to write two more books before he dies. Since he is now only 63 and has written 59 books since he began in 1895, this is a reasonable expectation from an actuarial standpoint. Particularly since he announces that he will have two more specially qualified collaborators on these works. His "Outline of History" was, it now appears, the first of a trilogy which he designs to serve provisionally as a sort of "bible" for the modern man. The second of the series, now in preparation, will be called "The Science of Life" and the third, only sketched, is "The Conquest of Power."

"The general idea of these writings is to present altogether, first a complete modern world outlook, politically speaking, then the moral data of the new time, and then the forecast of a collective economic policy, in a form accessible to a person of ordinary education. It is the presentation of the threefold basis for a modern ideology, historical, biological and economic. It is a pioneer attempt to get this written down connectedly."

On the basis of these ideas he hopes to have formed heterogeneous groups in all countries, especially of young men and women. But he is much afraid of the common fate of such movements, over-organization and sectarianism, so he does not venture to prescribe forms or programs for the groups though he does lay down the following creed for his disciples:

"1. The complete assertion, practical as well as theoretical, of the provisional nature of existing governments and of our acquiescence to them;

"2. The resolve to minimize by all available means the conflicts of these governments, their militant use of individuals and property and their interferences with the establishment of a world economic system;

"3. The determination to replace private local or national ownership of at least credit, transport and staple production by a responsible world directorate serving the common ends of the race;

"4. The practical recognition of the necessity for world biological controls, for example, of population and disease;

"5. The support of a minimum standard of individual freedom and welfare in the world; and

"6. The supreme duty of subordinating the personal life to the creation of a world directorate capable of these tasks and to the general advancement of human knowledge, capacity and power.

"The admission therewith that our immortality is conditional and lies in the race and not in our individual selves."

Readers of Wells will recognize in this the gradual development of his thought as registered in his former works. They will remember that as late as 1913 he was writing "Little Wars" which was commended as "a vivid and inspiring Kriegspiel" for "boys from twelve years of age to one hundred and fifty." But during the next four years he had too much Kriegspiel so now he is a strong pacifist. It was during the war, too, that he acquired a religion, or at least a realization of the need of something of the sort, as he revealed in "Mr. Britling" and "The Undying Fire." Now he opens his "Open Conspiracy" with a chapter on the "Necessity of Religion to Human Life" while he explains what he means in the second chapter entitled "Subordination of Self the Essence of Religion." In 1917 he wrote that "the Kingdom of God over a world-wide system of republican states is the only possible formula under which we may hope to unify and save mankind." But this was in the book entitled "Italy, France and Britain at War," which, like his book of 1914, "The War That Will End War," is omitted now from the list of his writings.

Wells has always been eagerly searching for utopias. He tried the Fabian Society for a time. Next he came over to America in 1905 to find out why the Oneida Community failed. After the revolution he went to Russia to see if the Soviet might be on the right track. Now he is emphatically antagonistic against all communists, and would exclude them from his "Open Conspirators."

But with all his hopeful seeking his mental compass has turned pretty steady toward its aim and in 1914 the main lines of his trilogy were clearly forecast in one of his most remarkable and least known books, "The World Set Free."

—E. E. SLOSSON.

Science News-Letter, October 6, 1928

How the Moon Happened

Geology

R. A. DALY, in *Our Mobile Earth* (Scribner's):

We now turn to the other two suggestions, both involving the problem of the moon's origin.

Two master mathematicians have attacked this problem, and each has published an explanation of our moon. Each explanation assumes the moon to have been at one time a part of the planet, and to have been separated catastrophically when the young planet was rotating very rapidly.

The one solution to the problem is due to Henri Poincaré. He showed that a liquid planet, rotating at a certain high speed, would take on a pear-shaped figure, which would be stable for that speed. If, however, the rotational velocity were slightly increased, the small end of the pear would break off and, as an independent body, would revolve around the center of gravity that is common to both parts of the original mass. Poincaré suggested this origin for the moon. . . .

The other solution to the lunar problem is that of another prince among the mathematical physicists, George H. Darwin. He also assumed the moon to be a daughter of the earth. According to Darwin, the forces determining the break-up of the original earth were two in number. The more powerful of these was the centrifugal force due to the earth's rapid rotation. The second, less directly powerful but no less essential, was the tidal force which was exerted on the planet by the sun. The tidal force was feeble, but Darwin showed how its effects might have been built up so as to cause the original earth to break into large fragments. The catastrophic accumulation of effects was attributed to the principle called "resonance." Without describing the mechanism of resonance, I shall here merely note its practical effect, according to Darwin. The mechanism worked to the point of producing a tidal wave in the molten earth, which was of the order of 1,000 kilometers in height. When the leaping tide had reached such a height, its acceleration was enough to cause one or more large pieces of the planet to jump clear away from the main body. The matter, thus propelled out of the original earth, had its own center of gravity. Around that center the ejected matter pulled itself together by its own gravitation, into a nearly spherical form and began an independent career as our moon.

Science News-Letter, October 6, 1928